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THE VALIDITY OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

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ZONDERVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
GRAND RAPIDS MICHIGAN

THE VALIDITY OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

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Zondervan Publishing House

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 63-20390

DEDICATED

to my wife Hazel who has been a constant
inspiration and to our children

Sarah Katherine

George Howard

Ilka Louise

Raymond Corson

Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

This printing — 1964

Printed in the United States of America

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Introduction — The Virgin Birth

I.

Introduction — The Virgin Birth

The contemporary theological dialog relative to the doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ has attracted our serious attention. It is apparent that the theological tug-of-war which began at the turn of the century between the "Biblical Conservatives" and the "Philosophical Liberals" is still going on.

The General Theological Seminary (Protestant Episcopal) has been charged with "unorthodox indoctrination" by the board of the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey with the endorsement of Bishop Alfred L. Banyard. The protest included reference to the doctrine of the virgin birth as a matter on which graduates from this school showed "inability and unwillingness to accept the position of the church." This protest was filed after three graduates failed to qualify for ordination. A similar controversy developed among the Presbyterians. One of the most recent cases involved Dr. John H. Hicks, who was challenged by the New Brunswick Presbytery because he refused to affirm faith in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. The negative outburst by Bishop James Pike relative to the doctrine of the virgin birth has helped to focus our attention on this theological tempest.

This writer recently published an article on this subject in *The Christian Advocate*. (For reprint of this article see Appendix B). The editor of this journal stated: "The *Christian Advocate* received more letters on that article than any other article it printed, with one exception, for a number of years." In a later communication the same editor stated: "We have received 61 letters supporting your article and 13 against." It should be pointed out that all of the negative letters were based upon arbitrary philosophical considerations; none challenged the biblical thesis. Despite the ridicule and denial of the liberal writers, it is apparent that a vast majority of the people at large still subscribe to the authenticity of the biblical record and its clear-cut statement on the validity of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.

Louis Matthews Sweet (ISBE) points out that "the importance for modern thinking on the virgin birth statement is threefold: (1) First, it involves, in general, the question, never more vital than at the present time, of the trustworthiness of the gospel tradition." Since the doctrine of the virgin birth is foundational and essential for establishing the deity of Jesus Christ, it has been under frequent attack. The suppositions of the attack and the method by which it has been conducted involve a general and radical undermining of confidence in the testimony of the gospel witnesses. (2) "The Virgin Birth is important for the simple historical reason that it involves or is involved in a clear and consistent account of the Lord's birth and early years. Apart from the infancy narratives we are utterly without direct information as to His birth, ancestry or early years. Apart from these narratives we have no information as to the marriage of Joseph and Mary; apart from the Gospel record we are limited to vague inferences regarding this entire period. No biographer ever leaves these points obscure if he can avoid it. It is earnestly suggested that those who discredit the infancy story do not clearly recognize the seriousness of the situation brought about in the absence of any narrative which can be trusted at this vital point. The Christian believer can assert nothing apart from what the biblical record contains. (3) Lastly, the more closely the statement of the Lord's birth is studied, the more clearly it will be seen that it involves, in a most vital and central way, the entire doctrine of the Incarnation. This doctrine is an interpretation of facts. Those facts stand together. In the midst of those facts is the consistent testimony of the oldest symbol of our historical faith: 'Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary' (see *Apostles' Creed*). There is no adequate reason why the intelligent believer should feel uncertain as to this statement of our holy religion."

Frequently the Immaculate Conception is projected in the thinking of some people as being synonymous with the virgin birth. In order to avoid confusion and misunderstanding it should be pointed out that the virgin birth and the Immaculate Conception are not one and the same. There is in fact no biblical relationship between the doctrine of the virgin birth and the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The doctrine of the virgin birth is an established biblical doctrine, and so recognized by traditional Christianity while the Immaculate Conception is

a speculative dogma introduced in a Papal Bull by Pope Pius IX on December 8, 1854.

The doctrine of the virgin birth is unique and peculiar to the birth of Jesus Christ. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception has to do only with the birth of the Virgin Mary. To state it briefly, this dogma declares that "by Christ's merits and in view of the fact that she was to be his mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary was from the moment of her conception in St. Anne's womb kept free from original sin."

Sweet says: "There is every reason to believe that one of the major motives to the entire transaction was the wish, on the part of Pius and his advisers, to make an unmistakable assertion of absolute doctrinal authority by the Roman Pontiff." It is also evident that there is a "tendency to Mariolotry in the entire movement . . . one has but to survey the course of discussion . . . to discover a growing tendency to lift Mary out of the realm of human beings and to endow her with Divine attributes and functions."

A further word should be given with regard to the Incarnation. Those who accept the Bible as the infallible Word of God believe that the virgin birth is an integral part of the Incarnation. This whole idea is woven into "the warp and woof" of divine revelation from Genesis to Revelation. To trace this pattern would involve a careful study from the first "intimations of the nature and the person of the Messiah in Old Testament prophecy."

Matthew presents the Incarnation in these words: "Now the birth of Jesus was on this wise: when as his mother Mary was espoused (engaged) to Joseph, before they came together (or had marital relation), she was found with child of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 1:18).

In Luke the Incarnation is presented in the words of the angel to Mary: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy One that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

This is part of the basic foundation on which traditional Christianity has established faith in the doctrine of the virgin birth from the apostles down to the present time. Any interpretation which deviates from this position is not pure biblical Christianity.

It is to be recognized, however, that this biblical view is denied by a certain class of scholars who assume that the Bible is natural human history and subject to the "scientific investigative techniques" now employed in an analysis of secular history. To this class of scholars there is apparently no meaning in the divine statement: "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:20), and "ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Timothy 3:16).

Scholars of this persuasion insist that thoughtful men can no longer hold to the faith of our fathers and that Christianity must be restated in new terms that are in harmony with modern science and acceptable to "modern men," even though it be at the cost of rejecting those old cherished Bible doctrines. For nineteen hundred years Christian people have believed and loved these Bible doctrines. Now we are told by these "scholars" that the old foundations are no longer sound; they assert that we must cast aside these trusted and time proved beliefs as we would a worn-out garment, and accept in their place the vague, indefinite and ever-changing postulates and conclusions of science and philosophy. It is further asserted by this "new school" that modern men have a new conception of God and the universe which forbids belief in miracles, and which compels them to abandon the age-long faith in a personal Deity. God to them is not personal, though they use our Christian terms and address Him as Father, but rather an abstract philosophic conception of a universal Energy, or Principle, which can be interpreted only in the light of evolution, and by "men of science." Consequently they argue for the necessity of a new and ever-changing theology which, they affirm, must be built to harmonize with the new and everchanging and enlarging conception of God, the universe, and advancing scientific knowledge. It is the contention of these men that the miracles, including the virgin birth, cannot be made to fit into this new conception of God and the universe, and therefore, belief in them must be abandoned. It is further asserted that to believe in the virgin birth implies a rejection of scientific truth, and that this doctrine runs counter to natural law. They insist that we should bravely face the facts, welcome the new light of science, take what is sound out of the wreckage of the old beliefs (and the Bible) and with the new views seek to win modern men to a new faith in a new

universe, a "new Christ," a "new Bible" and a new conception of God.

In much of our church school literature today we are told that the Bible must be checked against the findings of science and that those things in the Bible which do not conform to modern science must be rejected. Thus the Bible of science is super-imposed upon the divinely inspired Scriptures of the church. The Bible is to speak to us about the "who and why" and science is to become our authority for the "how and when." Now let us follow this line of thought to see where some brands of science lead us. Let us call in as witnesses the leading proponents of this so-called "scientific theology." No better group can be presented than the eighteen representatives from THE INSTITUTE ON RELIGION IN AN AGE OF SCIENCE, composed of clergymen, seminary professors and scientists. Ralph S. Burhoe, a member of this group, presents a "scientific view of salvation" in *Science Ponders Religion*. In this chapter, derisive remarks are made with regard to Christian faith in the resurrection of the body and the idea of rewards or punishment after death. The writer points out that modern science has stripped man of his capacity to believe in the biblical doctrine of immortality because these ideas cannot be made to conform with the newer doctrines of science. We are told that science has been responsible for disintegrating belief in immortality as well as other biblical beliefs. The skepticism thus defined is best reflected in the recent *Red-book* articles (August and November, 1961), in which a report is given on a survey among seminary students in some of our liberal seminaries. This report states that 98% who were questioned no longer feel that the idea of man's immortality is an important tenet of their faith. Disbelief in most of the other traditional Christian doctrines was also expressed. On the basis of these observations it becomes increasingly clear why there is such reaction against this "scientific religious" approach.

Out of the renewed interest in this basic, traditional Christian doctrine has come the inspiration to present the traditional biblical view on this subject.

The materials in this publication present the essential facts gathered from many sources. Out of this study several facts have emerged:

1. The doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ has been a controversial subject for many years. Conservative scholars have always adhered closely to the biblical account while liberal scholars have placed a more sophisticated and philosophical interpretation upon it.
2. Liberal theologians make much of the suppositions that the story of the virgin birth is a legend springing from Jewish roots as well as from heathen mythology and legend. (Some of these views are discussed in the Appendix).
3. The doctrine of the virgin birth is definitely an integral part of traditional Christianity.
4. Many modern day theological conclusions are based exclusively upon arbitrary philosophical postulates and not the biblical record.

The writer proposes to call in a multitude of witnesses for close questioning. These witnesses will be drawn from a wide field, including both profane and sacred history. From the evidence thus gathered an effort will be made to show the affinity between the doctrine of the virgin birth and the basic doctrines of Christianity, and that the doctrine is valid.

No effort has been made to prove the supernatural reality of God; it is a prior assumption. The Bible is accepted as the authoritative and infallible *Word of God*.

The Witnesses to the Virgin Birth

II.

The Witnesses to the Virgin Birth

A. THE OLD TESTAMENT WITNESSES

1. *Confirmation of the Virgin Birth by the Old Testament Miracles*

The miraculous ways in which God brought about certain ends is an established fact. God brought the first man into the world without benefit of father or mother. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). No one can say that the virgin birth was a greater miracle than the creation of man.

Even the mother of the human race was brought into the world in a miraculous way — without a mother. "And the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man" (Genesis 2:21, 22). Is the virgin birth a greater miracle than this? Obviously not! The virgin birth of Christ is in harmony with the wonder-working miracles of God.

God turned the rod in Moses' hand into a serpent (Exodus 4:3); God made the bitter water at Marah good to drink (Exodus 15:25); God made water to come gushing forth from the rock in the wilderness (Exodus 17:6); God healed the people through a look upon the brazen serpent (Numbers 21:8); God caused the Jordan river to divide so that the Hebrews could cross over into Canaan (Joshua 3) and God miraculously delivered Jericho into the hands of Joshua (Joshua 6). Surely these miracles are no greater or no less than the virgin birth of Christ. No person with average intelligence can look upon these miracles with favor and then speak lightly of the virgin birth.

Jesus, the pre-existent Christ, lived from the beginning with the Father. "He himself was the Great Creator and is the Great Sustainer of all things. Christ, the Creator, through the virgin

birth, became flesh and took the form of a created human being. Through this supernatural birth Christ (who is God) became man without ceasing to be God. Jehovah brought Eve into the world from the body of a man without a mother. He brought Jesus Christ into the world from a woman without a human father.”¹

To say that God performed various and sundry miracles and yet limit Him short of the miraculous virgin birth would be to rob God of His omnipotence. To say that the virgin birth is a violation of natural law is ridiculous because all other miracles appear to violate natural law. The greatest realities, after all, have to do with a law that transcends natural law. If we accept the proposition that there is a God, we automatically accept at least one miracle: the very existence of God involves a miracle. And after all, what does man know about the law of the universe? Obviously, man’s factual knowledge is limited, and necessarily so. Man’s vision is limited to a small section of the spectrum; man’s ability to hear is limited in relationship to the full scale of sound, and likewise man’s knowledge of the knowable is limited. We must distinguish between theory and fact. Man has made numerous efforts to confine God to his own little universe, but without success. God is greater and mightier than any limitation of which man can conceive. Some people say that miracles are a violation of natural law. That statement is a mistake. “No law of nature is suspended or violated when personal causation is added to natural causation. By the law of gravity a book held suspended in the air has an attraction toward the earth that would cause it to fall if not held. It doesn’t fall because I [*sic*] hold it, but in so doing, do I [*sic*] at all violate or suspend the law? Not in the least. The law of gravitation is in full working order on that book all the time, but there is also another force present, the force of personal causation, and therefore a different result is reached. So it is with miracles. The new and unusual cause, God’s will acting directly, results in a new and unusual event without in any way violating or suspending existing laws. The credibility of miracles is therefore not a scientific question. It is a question of the existence of God.”²

¹Karl G. Sabiers, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, Los Angeles: Robertson Publishing Company, 1943, p. 67.

²Albertus Pieters, *The Facts and Mysteries of the Christian Faith*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1933, p. 95.

If God knew only one way to bring human beings into the world and if He could use only one way, He could not have created Adam without a father or mother. If God knew only one way, He could not have brought Eve into existence without a mother. If God brought Adam into the world out of the dust of the ground and Eve out of a rib and succeeding human generations through yet a third way, through natural conception, why not a fourth way? Why not through the virgin birth? Why limit God at all? It is well to take note that "with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

In one of his recent books, *Possibilities Unlimited*, Dr. Daniel L. Morris, a professional chemist, suggests that "it is unscientific to say that a so-called miracle did not happen, for we may someday discover that there are laws not now known to us, which account for what we cannot now understand The process of living requires decisions that go far beyond anything that science can prove."

Dr. Pieters reminds us that "the hieroglyphics on the monuments of Egypt were for ages unintelligible. Men seeing them did not know whether they were words or scratches without meaning, but finally someone found a clue. Working on that, little by little, they discovered meaning in what seemed meaningless marks; and presently they discovered records of kings and laws. When this came to pass, no one doubted that intelligent men had engraved these hieroglyphics upon the rock . . . Phenomena, at first meaningless and unrelated, have been found to be full of order and beauty."³

The alleged conflict between science and religion is really a conflict between genuine religion and pseudo-science. It is appalling to note the ignorance of Bible content and teaching that is expressed by some men of science. The misconceptions of ancient people is quoted as biblical fact, e.g., that the earth is flat or square, etc. True science only demonstrates and reveals that which has always been true, and no evidence has been produced to show that the findings of true science conflict with divine truth and law.

When it is examined in the light of all prior miracles, the virgin birth does not appear to be more illogical than any other miraculous act of God. With God the virgin birth is not neces-

³*Ibid.*, p. 24.

sarily unusual because miracles are characteristic of God. Surely, the Old Testament miracles of God confirm the virgin birth.

2. *Confirmation of the Virgin Birth by the
Old Testament Prophecies*

(a) Genesis 3:15

The prophecies in the Old Testament are the windows through which God admits light on future events. Through the progressiveness of revelation God gives a composite picture of the Messiah, the Christ, who would take away the sins of the world. Apart from Christ's virgin birth there is no possible fulfillment of these prophecies.

It is interesting to note that one of the first prophecies in the Old Testament is one in which God is speaking to Satan: "And I (God) will put enmity between thee (Satan) and the woman, and between thy seed (Satan's seed), and her seed (The woman's seed — Christ), it (the woman's seed — Christ) shall bruise thy head (Satan's head), and thou (Satan) shall bruise his heel (Christ's heel)."

It is evident that this prophecy refers to Christ because He did truly bruise Satan's (the serpent's) head. Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, states historically that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son *made of a woman*, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law" (Galatians 4:4).

When Christ hung on the cross, He literally bruised Satan's head. His defeat of Satan was complete. The writer of Hebrews tells the Jewish converts that "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he (Christ) also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him (Satan) that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrew 2:14). In the final analysis Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4).

In the Genesis reference we have a statement that, when examined in the light of history, is indeed suggestive of *Him* who was born of a woman and whose seed has been at odds with the seed of Satan. The enmity that prevails between the righteous forces on one hand and the evil forces on the other is continually manifesting itself. A holy war has been going on between the forces of righteousness and the forces of evil since this judgment of God was pronounced.

The serpent's head is bruised, even as satanic forces, incarnate in man, bruised Christ's heel when the cruel spikes were driven through His quivering flesh. Dr. Adam Clark recognized in this Scripture the same prophetic implications when he said that "in these words, it shall bruise thy head, or rather *Hu* (word in Hebrew text), *He*; who? The seed of the woman; the person is to come by the *woman*, and by her *alone without the concurrence of man*. Therefore the address is not to Adam and Eve, but to *Eve alone*; and it was in consequence of this purpose of God that Jesus Christ was born of a *virgin*; this, and this alone, is what is implied in the promise of the *seed of the woman* bruising the head of the serpent. Jesus Christ died to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and to destroy him who had the power of death that is, the devil. Thus he *bruised his head* — destroyed his *power* and *lordship* over mankind, turning them from the power of Satan unto God; Acts XXVI 18. And Satan *bruises His heel* — God so ordered it, that the Salvation of man could only be brought about by the *death of Christ*." ⁴

It is of interest to note that by woman sin was introduced into the world, and by woman a Saviour from sin was given (Galatians 1:14).

(b) Isaiah 7:14

Seven hundred years before Christ was born, the prophet Isaiah wrote a prophecy concerning the birth of the Messiah. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).⁵

⁴Adam Clark, "Genesis," *Clark's Commentary*, New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, p. 53.

⁵The Hebrew word '*Almah*' in its two forms, is used only seven times in the Hebrew Scriptures (Genesis 24:43; Exodus 2:8; Psalms 68:25; Proverbs 30:19; Canticles 1:3 and Isaiah 7:14). In each of these references the text clearly implies a chaste, unmarried girl. This word is never used in any other connection. On the other hand, the Hebrew word *Bethulah*, also meaning virgin, is used fifty times and has reference to persons as well as nations. (Jeremiah 18:13; Lamentations 2:10; Amos 5:2, etc.). The careful scholar cannot help but note that in the RSV the word '*Almah*' in Genesis 24:43 and Isaiah 7:14 is rendered "young woman" and in Psalms 68:25; Proverbs 30:10; Canticles 1:3 and Canticles 6:8 it is rendered "maiden or maidens" while in Exodus 2:8 it is rendered "girl." It may well be asked: Why these inconsistent or divergent readings?

Dr. George Allen Turner, noted Harvard graduate, points out that "In none of these instances is the idea of virginity clearly lacking in the term '*Almah*'. On the contrary, it is implied in each instance and specifically indicated in at least one (Genesis 24:43; cf. 24:16). The only basis for saying that '*Almah*' is not the regular term for virgin is that it is not the common term." Dr. Turner continues: "It seems clear that the derivation of '*Almah*' is from the verb *Alam* meaning 'to hide' or 'conceal' and means a young woman who has not been uncovered, i.e., one who has not known man. The evidence indicates also that had Isaiah wished to say 'young woman' he would have chosen the term *Na'arah*, the term which the RSV usually translates as 'young woman'."⁶ Dr. Turner points out, and rightly so, that "the importance of the verse . . . lies not only in the fact that it is a proof-text for the virgin birth, but that Matthew 1:23 quotes it as a prediction of Jesus' birth to the Virgin Mary. Thus, it involves Matthew's trustworthiness as an interpreter of the Old Testament. Since the Greek Old Testament was widely used in the early church, it is probable that the author of Matthew was influenced by that version for in quoting Isaiah 7:14 Matthew uses the same Greek term (*parthenos*: i.e., virgin) as is found in the Greek Old Testament, the *Septuagint* (LXX)."⁷

The meaning of the Greek word *parthenos* is clearly indicated in our Greek lexicons to mean "a person unacquainted with the other sex, a virgin or a maid."⁸

By giving the world a virgin-born Messiah, God eliminated the possibility that a counterfeit or false Messiah could come. Only the virgin born would be able to lay claim to this office. The fact that this person was to be called Emmanuel, meaning "God with us," is clear indication that a "sign" would accompany the manifestation of the Redeemer here clearly set forth in prophecy. This divine name could not have been given an ordinary human being — it could have been given only to the God-man Jesus Christ, who was truly born as the prophets had declared.

⁶George Allen Turner, "The Revised Standard Version Under Fire" *The Christian Minister*, Feb. 1953.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸John Groves, *A Greek and English Dictionary*, Phila: J. B. Lippincott and Co., p. 447.

Sifting world history does not reveal a single human being of whom it could be said he is "God with us." This reference "can refer only to Christ because Christ is God. Christ is the only One who can be rightfully called Immanuel, 'God with us.' This is indeed an appropriate name for His coming to earth. He is God . . . manifest in the flesh (I Timothy 3:16). He (Christ) 'was made flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1:14). Christ is the Immanuel — 'God with us.' This name carries with it the true meaning of the Incarnation — namely God with us in human flesh." ⁹

It is interesting to note that the prophecy clearly states that a virgin should bear a *son*, not a daughter. This careful detail of gender is indeed indicative of the prophet's inspiration. The Messiah to come was to be a son, born of a virgin. Nowhere in history can another than Christ be found who fits into this picture.

It is to be acknowledged that the Isaiah 7:14 passage is couched in a historical reference pertaining to the prophet's own time. Critics of the "Messiah Interpretation" at this point ask: How can the coming of Christ seven centuries later be made to fix the time for the forsaking of the land of Israel and Syria? What relevance does this text have to King Ahaz?

In reply it must be pointed out that many prophetic and especially Messianic texts in the Old Testament have a setting quite foreign to the context in which they are found; they appear as a kind of prophetic parenthesis. Frequently these prophetic texts have the same relationship to the context as does a precious stone in the native ore in which it is imbedded. The historical context becomes the mounting in which these peculiar prophetic statements are set. This idea is further illustrated in such Messianic prophecies as Psalms 22:16, 18; 34:20; 41:9; 69:21; Zechariah 9:9; 11:12, 13, etc.

From a literary point of view, the Scriptures cannot be made to conform to the "scientific investigative techniques" which are so commonly applied to secular literature. The Scriptures are uniquely "God breathed" and are designed to convey redemptive revelation inherent in the Christ Messiah. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" and the ways of God are foolishness to the natural or sinner man (See I Corinthians 2:10-14).

⁹Sabiers, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, p. 58.

Machen says, "It is certainly clear that something more than the Israelitish people is meant by the figure of the "Servant of Jehovah" in the latter part of Isaiah; and it is certainly clear that something more is meant by "Immanuel" in our passage than the child of the prophet or of Ahaz or any ordinary young woman of that time. A really sympathetic and intelligent reader can hardly . . . doubt but that in the "Immanuel" of the seventh and eighth chapters of Isaiah, in the "child" of the ninth chapter, whose name shall be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace," in the "branch" of the eleventh chapter, one mighty divine personage is meant. The common minimizing interpretations may seem plausible in detail; but they disappear before the majestic sweep of the passages when they are taken as a whole."¹⁰ Added light is given to us by our Lord in such passages as Luke 24:27: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (see also Luke 24:44).

"However, an objection lies ready to hand. If the passage in the seventh chapter of Isaiah constitutes a real prophecy of Christ, what shall be done with the plain reference in the sixteenth verse to events belonging to the prophet's own time? How can the coming of Christ to years of discretion some seven centuries later be made to fix the time for the forsaking of the land of Israel and Syria? Surely some more immediate birth of a child must be in view.

"In reply, either one of two things may be said. In the first place, it may be held that the prophet has before him in vision the birth of the child Immanuel, and that irrespective of the ultimate fulfillment the vision itself is present. 'I see a wonderful child,' the prophet on this interpretation would say, 'a wonderful child whose birth shall bring salvation to his people; and before such a period of time shall elapse as would lie between the conception of the child in his mother's womb and his coming years of discretion, the land of Israel and of Syria shall be forsaken. . . . It is difficult, indeed, to set it forth adequately in our bald modern speech; but the objections to it largely fall away when one reads the exalted language of the prophet as the language of prophetic vision ought really to be read.

¹⁰J. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, New York: Harper and Bros., 1930, p. 291.

"In the second place, one may hold that in the passage some immediate birth of a child is in view, but that that event is to be taken as the foreshadowing of the greater event that was to come. Does an immediate reference to a child of the prophet's own day really exclude the remoter and grander reference that determines the quotation in the first chapter of Matthew? . . . We think not; and because we think not . . . we are able to accept still the use which the First Evangelist makes of the prophecy in the seventh chapter of Isaiah . . . in our passage the prophet, when he placed before the rebellious Ahaz that strange picture of the mother and the child, was not merely promising deliverance to Judah in the period before a child then born should know to refuse evil and choose the good, but also, moved by the Spirit of God, was looking forward, as in a dim and mysterious vision, to the day when the true Immanuel, the mighty God and Prince of Peace, should lie as a little babe in a virgin's arms.

"But such a reading of prophecy will not be induced, in those who have abandoned it, by any considerations that we can now bring forth; indeed, it will come only when there is a mighty revulsion from the shallowness of our present religious life, and when men are again ready to listen to the voice of the living God.

"It may perhaps at first sight seem strange that if Isaiah VII:14 is really a prophecy of the virgin birth of the Messiah, the later Jews should have so completely failed to interpret it in that way. But a parallel case is found in Isaiah LIII. If there is any one passage in the Old Testament which seems to the Christian heart to be a prophecy of the redeeming work of Christ, it is that matchless fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. We read it today, often even in preference to New Testament passages, as setting forth the atonement which our Lord made for the sins of others upon the cross. Never, says the simple Christian, was there a prophecy more gloriously plain. Yet the historian must admit that as a matter of fact the later Jews did not interpret the prophecy in any such way. Nothing seems to have been more foreign to later Judaism than the thought of the vicarious sufferings and death of the Messiah. The profound meaning of the Old Testament had at this point been missed; Jewish thought about the Messiah was moving along entirely different lines. So also it may have been, and with vastly better excuse, in the case of the mysterious prophecy in Isaiah VII:14. Undoubtedly it was

a prophecy of the virgin birth; but it was couched in such terms as to be fully intelligible only after the event.”¹¹

It should be pointed out that during the first century most of those who embraced the Christian faith were Jews — Jews in the strict spiritual sense — who anticipated the Messiah and accepted Him when He came. To what extent they understood all the intricate details of Jesus’ birth is a matter of conjecture, but the fact remains that they recognized Him as the Messiah.

Adam Clark says, “According to the original promise there was to be a seed, a human being, who should destroy sin; but this seed or human being, must come from the woman *alone*; and no woman *alone* could produce such a human being without being a virgin. Hence, a virgin shall bear a son, is the very spirit and meaning of the original text, independently of the illustration given by the prophet; and the fact recorded by the evangelist is proof of the whole. But how could that be a sign to Ahaz, which was to take place so many hundred years after? . . . the meaning of the prophet is plain: not only Rezin and Pekah should be unsuccessful against Jerusalem at that time, which was the fact, but Jerusalem, Judea and the house of David should be both preserved, notwithstanding their depressed state, and the multitude of their adversaries, till the time should come when a *virgin* should bear a son.

“This is the most remarkable circumstance — the house of David could never fail, till a virgin should conceive and bear a son — nor did it; but when that incredible and memorable fact did take place, the kingdom and the house of David became extinct. This is an irrefragable confutation of every argument a Jew can offer in vindication of his opposition to the Gospel of Christ. Either the prophecy in Isaiah has been fulfilled, or the kingdom and house of David are yet standing. But the kingdom of David, we know, is destroyed . . . The prophecy could not fail; the kingdom and house of David have not failed; the *virgin*, therefore, must have brought forth her son, and her son is Jesus, the Christ. Thus Moses, Isaiah, and Matthew concur; and the most unequivocal facts have confirmed the whole!

“Notwithstanding what has been said above, it may be asked, In what sense could this Immanuel be applied to Jesus Christ, if he be not truly and properly *God*? Could the spirit of

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 291, 4.

truth ever design that Christians should receive him as an angel or a mere man; and yet in the beginning of the Gospel history, apply a character to him which belongs only to the most high God? Surely not. In what sense, then, is Christ *God with us*? Jesus is called Immanuel, or God with us, in his incarnation; God united to our nature; God with man, God in man; God with us, by his continual protection; God with us, by the influence of his Holy Spirit, in the holy sacrament, in the preaching of his word, in private prayer. And God with us, through every action of our life, that we begin, continue and end in his name. He is God with us, to comfort, enlighten, protect, and defend us in every time of temptation and trial, in the hour of death, in the day of judgment; and God with us and in us, and we with and in him, to all eternity.”¹²

(c) Isaiah 9:6, 7

It is evident that Isaiah was speaking prophetically when he said: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the Throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:6, 7).

A critical analysis of this verse reveals that no human being in history could possibly fit into this picture. Jesus Christ, born as a child of the Virgin Mary, is the only One who could claim these qualities. Truly, only Jesus could be called the Wonderful Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

It is clearly revealed that “the King would be *human* because He was to be a child born” (Isaiah 9:6): human because He was to be a flesh descendant of David, “raised unto David” (Jeremiah 23:5). The King would be *divine* — He would be God — because of His titles of Deity, “*The mighty God*” (Isaiah 9:6), and “*The Lord of Righteousness*” (Jeremiah 23:5). He would be God because of the expressions of pre-existence, “*The everlasting Father*” (Isaiah 9:6), “*whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*” (Micah 5:2). These verses assure us that

¹²Clark, “Isaiah,” p. 56.

the Messiah and King who was to be born was to be very God as well as very man.

"No ordinary birth of two human parents could possibly account for this God-man. If Jesus Christ had been the Son of Joseph, He would have been a mere human being, and thus He could not have been God. Joseph was human — he could not beget God. Only a miraculous virgin birth can account for the God-man. Through the virgin birth, Jesus Christ could be both human and divine. Because of Mary, His mother, He was human, and because He was the Eternal Son of God, He was divine. He was God."¹³

(d) Jeremiah 31:22

God completed His work of creation on the sixth day. By the time Jeremiah came upon the scene, all things created were well established. However Jeremiah clearly states, prophetically, that "the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man" (Jeremiah 31:22b).

It is obvious that an ordinary birth of two human parents would not have been a "new thing." Instead of being a "new thing" it would actually be as old as the first born child to Adam and Eve — the first humanly born child. All subsequent human beings have been produced by their father and mother in the flesh. Jesus Christ our Lord is the only exception. Only He was born of the *woman alone*.

Since this verse does not make reference to a child born of two human parents we must look elsewhere for the answer. The question must be faced: who was this "new thing," so called? It is evident that this "new thing" did not come into being through a conventional course. The only "new thing" recorded in history since creation is the virgin birth of Christ. This "new thing" had to do with the miraculous — not with the conventional. No other person does or can lay claim to being miraculously conceived, notwithstanding the claims of liberalism (See Appendix).

It is futile to make this Scripture relevant to anything other than the virgin-born Messiah: to do so is to do violence to the biblical record. Christian scholars, both ancient and modern, believe that this verse referred to the supernatural element incidental in the birth of the King Messiah. Efforts on the part of

¹³Sabiers, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, p. 62.

liberal scholars to reduce Jesus Christ to a mere human being are arbitrary philosophical postulates and cannot be reconciled with the biblical record.

(e) Micah 5:2

The prophet Micah joins his fellow prophets in their affirmation of the virgin birth of the Messiah, the Christ. Even though living hundreds of years before the Messiah was born, he nevertheless sees in his prophetic telescope, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the rise of a great "ruler in Israel whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).

It is interesting to note that the prophet singles out the most unlikely place, Bethlehem, as the place where this great Ruler would make His Advent. History has verified the accuracy of his prediction. The Messiah, the Christ, was indeed born in Bethlehem as Micah foretold and as Isaiah, his contemporary, proclaimed, of a virgin. Micah is careful to note that the Messiah is One whose origin goes back to the days of eternity. He was co-existent with the Father from the very foundation of the world.

A later writer points out that there is "one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we by him" (I Corinthians 8:6). The same writer tells the Ephesians that "God . . . created all things by Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:2). Of Jesus Christ the Apostle Paul says, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, or dominions or principalities or powers: all things were created by him (Jesus Christ) and for him (Jesus Christ)" (Colossians 1:16). The writer of Hebrews points out that God "hath both in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom he made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:2).

The pre-existent glory of our Lord is affirmed in His High Priestly prayer: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5). In the Apocalypse Jesus Christ our Lord states categorically, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (Revelation 22:13).

The significance of the references to the pre-existent Christ here cited, first foretold by the prophets and later confirmed by the Lord Himself and reaffirmed by the apostles, establishes beyond a doubt the fact that Jesus of Bethlehem was something more than a mere man. He was not only a man, He was also the

very Son of God co-existent with God the Father from eternity. *Since the natural birth ushers in a new life, a new personality, and ONLY a new life, a new personality, Jesus Christ could not have been born in the usual way of human parents alone because He was in existence from before the foundation of the world.*

It is impossible to establish Jesus as having been born naturally of a human father and a human mother because He is unique, He is sinless, and He commanded powers not enjoyed by mere men. Jesus Christ could not have been of the stock of Adam because the chain of sin just did not continue through Him as it does through every human being born through natural conception.

The human race is reluctant to accept one from their midst as its Saviour and Lord. As great as many of our religious leaders have been — Paul, Luther, Wesley, Moody, Knox, Calvin — none of them could possibly claim to be our Saviour and Lord. This reluctance to accept a mere man as Lord and Saviour is suggested in Jesus' visit to Nazareth where "he could do no mighty works because of their unbelief." He went there as a complete exemplification of God the Father in love and truth, but despite this fact, they refused to accept Him as Lord. Why did they take this stand? It is obvious that they looked upon him as a mere man. The community joined in saying, "Is not this the carpenter's (Joseph's) son? is not this his mother Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?" And they were offended and everyone else would so be under the circumstances. They considered him to be a "mere man" and every other normal human being would be thus offended if a fellow man made the claim of being God. It can be observed that the truth of Jesus' virgin birth was known by some but not by all. Only the humble and lowly in spirit came to know the Saviour in His saving power. Only those humbled in mind and heart could know and understand the Truth.

It is obvious that no matter how godly and how compassionate a mere man might be, the world demands and needs a Saviour from another realm. This demand can be met only by the virgin born Lord who was manifest to take away our sins. Micah presents the "Ruler of Israel" as the Messiah who was looked for, as one "whose goings forth have been from of old,

from everlasting." Our virgin born Lord Jesus Christ is the only One who can claim this distinction. It is evident that Micah's account of the Ruler affirms the doctrine of the virgin birth.

B. THE NEW TESTAMENT WITNESSES

1. *Affirmation of the Virgin Birth by Mary*

The testimony of Mary certainly is clear, and no one could know the truth better than she. In her youthful innocence she protests the message the angel brings. She was a virgin — a young woman who had never had an intimate relationship with a man. It is no wonder that she said, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" This simple statement must be accepted as truth. The other alternative is to cast doubt upon Mary's character.¹⁴ Not only so, to reject this simple statement is to cast doubt upon the validity of the gospel record. No court in the land could take the evidence presented in the scriptural account without bringing out a true bill in behalf of Mary. *There is not one shred of evidence anywhere to show that the data presented in the gospel narrative is not valid and factual.* It is common practice in the courts of the land to consider a man innocent until he is proved guilty.

Mary's witness corresponds minutely with all of the New Testament witnesses.

It is well to note that God commissioned the angel Gabriel to go "unto a city in Galilee, named Nazareth," there to ferret out a young virgin named Mary who was engaged to a man "whose name was Joseph of the house of David."

¹⁴Devout Christians greatly resent the implied implications of certain scholars who deny the validity of the virgin birth and suggest that Jesus was conceived by Mary in a premarital sex relationship with Joseph, or even worse, was the illegitimate child of a soldier. Nels F. S. Ferre, a typical exponent of this view, says that "the birth stories, are to be sure, most improbable . . . for this reason, the simplest thing to believe may be that Joseph was the natural father of Jesus" and if not, "Jesus must have been the child of a German soldier. After all, the claim develops, such is the experience of many girls near military camps" and finally, "we have no way of knowing, even, that Jesus was sinless . . ." (*The Christian Understanding of God*, New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1951, p. 192). It would seem that this assumption, based upon purely arbitrary philosophical postulations, does not give Mary's testimony any credence whatsoever, nor does it recognize any degree of scriptural integrity.

The angel makes his announcement with a note of authority, and why shouldn't he? Had he not left the portals of heaven a short time before for the exact purpose of bringing a special message? The message is imperative. There is no question about it. The angel's statement, "Thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with Thee: blessed art thou among women," leaves little room for doubt or question.

The record tells us that "she was troubled at his saying (not at his appearance) and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be." By virtue of her innocence she would naturally be troubled and distressed. No one knew better than she that the announcement could not have to do with natural conception. It was not until the angel explained the supernatural nature of the event about to happen that Mary was willing to assume this grave responsibility. Only after she was assured that the message was of the Lord did she say, "Be it unto me according to Thy Word."

Not only does the angel tell Mary that the Holy Ghost is to come upon her and that she shall bear a child but also, "Thou shalt conceive and bring forth a son and shall call his name *Jesus*. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the Throne of his father David."

With all of the scientific knowledge available to the medical profession, there is no way a doctor can determine the sex of a child far in advance of birth. In Mary's case, however, the divine messenger declared that Mary is to give birth to a *son*, and this declaration was made before the child was conceived. In addition to the sex, the name was given, and the name of Jesus could fit only a male.

The child's sex and name was decided in heaven and Mary knew this before the Holy Spirit's conceptive relationship took place. The name in question was significant of the purpose for which Christ was coming to earth — "to save his people from their sins."

It can be pointed out that this information was given to Joseph as well as Mary. Both knew the name and sex of the child to be born. There was nothing questionable or indefinite about it. One of the strongest evidences for the virgin birth of Jesus is that Mary herself witnessed to the fact that she was a virgin. Who is in a position to deny it? A denial of her state-

ment could be based only upon the most vicious false imagination because there is no supporting evidence to the contrary. In the Matthew account it is clearly stated that the child was conceived "before they (Joseph and Mary) came together" and that "Joseph knew her not until she had brought forth her first-born son" (Matthew 1:18, 24-25).

If the gospel narrative pertaining to the birth of Jesus is received with an open mind, there can be no conclusion other than that Mary's testimony was true. Jesus was indeed born of the Virgin Mary in accordance with the biblical account.

2. *Affirmation of the Virgin Birth by Joseph*

The next witness in our case is Joseph. Certainly he is a qualified witness because he is one of the principals in the case. Only he and Mary could know the truth as no others could. The record is clear and straight forward. There is no effort on the part of Joseph to hide anything.

Attention should be drawn to the genealogical table in the first chapter of Matthew. To some this table is without significance, but actually it is important to the people for which this gospel was written, namely the Jews. They were quite proud of their ancestry, and to them the "begats" were important. The begats tied together a long list of important personages making up the history of the Jews. Matthew traces the line back to Abraham, and after all Abraham was considered by the Jews to be the father of their nation. It can be noted that "Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Joseph." All through the long genealogy one male begat another male, all the way from Abraham down to where we read, "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (Matthew 1:16). The word "begat" is used to link every male in the list, but when the narrator comes to the birth of Jesus, everything changes. Here the word "begat" is missing and that rightly so, because Joseph did not "begat" Jesus. It can be pointed out that "Jacob begat Joseph" but when reference is made to Jesus, the male line is set aside and the Virgin Mary's name is substituted.

The word "begat" refers to the work of the male, but the word "born" refers uniquely to the female. Thus the genealogical table rightly ends: "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, *of whom was born Jesus*, who is called Christ" (Matthew 1:16).

The phrase, "of whom," clearly and definitely credits the birth to Mary and Mary alone. The male function "begat" did not enter into the picture. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, and thus it has been understood by the church through the ages. Doubts with regard to the virgin birth did not arise until relatively recent years when "science so called" began to subject spiritual truth to "scientific investigative techniques."

To say that "whom" refers to Joseph is simply doing violence to any and all known laws of grammar and good English. If this construction were adopted at this point it would put into question the meaning of any clearly stated fact.

As a final consideration, it can be pointed out that in the Greek text, the word "whom" is in the feminine gender, proving beyond doubt that "whom" refers to Mary and not Joseph. Jesus was born of Mary, and neither Joseph nor any other male had anything to do with the birth of Jesus. It can be noted from the text that "the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: when as his mother was espoused (engaged) to Joseph, before they came together (as man and wife), she was found with child of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 1:18).

Joseph and Mary were engaged, and no doubt they spent many happy hours drifting on the moonlit sea of romance making plans for the time when they would become man and wife. In modern times engagements are announced one day and frequently broken the next, but in Joseph's day an engagement could not be easily broken, nor was it made hastily. In those days an engagement was absolute and binding. The engagement contract was sacred and final. Only a "bill of divorcement" could break an engagement. Everything went along smoothly until one day Joseph found out that Mary was with child. It is difficult to imagine the emotions Joseph must have experienced — this man who was so deeply in love with Mary. The girl he loved would soon give birth to a child, and Joseph knew that he was not the father. His faith and confidence in Mary was great, but this notwithstanding, questions could not help but race through his mind. Had he been mistaken after all? His struggle to believe Mary was challenged by the fact that she was with child. He did not know the facts in the case at first. Joseph wanted to do the right thing by Mary, and he knew that if this situation were brought to the attention of the authorities Mary would be stoned.

He could thereby shed any further responsibility for Mary, but Joseph was a "just man" and being "just" involves mercy. Even though Mary was with child, he still loved her and wanted to smooth over the whole situation without unfavorable publicity. Joseph was "not willing to make her a public example."

He was not willing that she should be tried by the court. About the verdict there was no doubt. Did not the law of Moses prescribe stoning as the penalty for adultery, and adultery would be the charge because of her engagement to him (Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 20:10)? Had Mary been taken to the authorities in Jerusalem, she would have suffered the fate of Stephen.

Joseph thought the whole matter through and came to the conclusion that his destiny was closely linked with Mary's. He made a decision. He "was minded to put her away privily" (Matthew 1:18). He would find a private home and leave Mary there until after the child was born. There can be no doubt about Joseph's sense of fairness and justice. Certainly it could be said of him, "He was a just man."

But before Joseph could take action "the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream saying, Joseph, Thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name *Jesus*: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:20, 21).

It is difficult to imagine the emotional experience Joseph must have had when he came to realize that his faith in Mary was still justified. If Joseph was of an emotional nature, he no doubt shouted praise and glory to God. What wonderful news this must have been.

Not only was it good news as far as lifting suspicion and guilt from Mary; it was good news because the revelation meant that the Messiah would be related to his household. Joseph was a "just man," a holy man, a religious man who was well acquainted with the Scriptures. He had read in the prophet Isaiah that at some future date God would give a special sign from heaven. This was it. Joseph did not find it difficult to believe the angelic revelation because he was one of those who looked for "His coming." Now the pattern of God's plan became clear.

"The fullness of the time" was at hand. Now was the time when Isaiah's prophecy of the Messiah would be fulfilled. Had not Isaiah clearly stated seven hundred years before that "the

Lord himself shall give a sign; Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"? The angel's message was all Joseph needed to revive fully his faith in Mary. The fact that the Lord had chosen Mary to be the vessel through which the Messiah would come was indeed good news to Joseph. He did not long delay. "Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife; and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name *Jesus*" (Matthew 1:25).

Mary knew that her unique experience was real and gives convincing testimony to this fact. Joseph believed in the virgin birth and does not hesitate to act accordingly. Early Christians believed in the virgin birth and raised no questions about it.

Christians throughout the ages who have experienced Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour have found the doctrine of the virgin birth good and acceptable and according to the plain teachings of God's Word. Truly, Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary through the influence of the Holy Ghost.

3. *Affirmation of the Virgin Birth by Jesus*

The crafty Pharisees were ever on the alert for an opportunity to ask Jesus a confusing question. They hoped that by some slip of the tongue Jesus would give an answer that they could misconstrue as blasphemy. "When the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence . . . one of them who was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" (Matthew 22:34-36). If they could get Jesus to single out one commandment as being more important than another they could take Him before the Sanhedrin and accuse Him of blasphemy.

On this occasion Jesus pointed out to them that the great commandment was supreme love for God and that the commandment of love fulfilled all the requirements of the law (Matthew 22:38-40). Before they recovered from this startling answer Jesus said unto them, "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They said unto him, the Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then calls him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions" (Matthew 22:42-46).

The Pharisees were well acquainted with the Messianic prophecies. They had been looking for the Messiah — the Christ — of whom the prophets spoke from the time of Moses and before. When Jesus said to them, "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?" the Pharisees did not hesitate to answer, "The Son of David." They had not anticipated that Jesus would turn the tables on them. Jesus first asked a question of such nature that caused them to admit that the Messiah — the Christ — would be the son of David. At this point Jesus reaches deep into the Old Testament and quotes a Messianic Psalm with which all of them were acquainted. "By quoting this Psalm Jesus reminded them that the Lord (Christ) was the God of David. After giving them this last bit of information, Jesus asked the Pharisees a question which left them completely bewildered . . . Jesus asked if David considered that Christ was his Lord or God, how then could Christ also be David's son? In other words, how could Christ be the God of David and the son of David at the same time? The Jews could not answer this question. They could not understand or explain how Christ could be the God of David and at the same time the son of David."¹⁵

One of the obvious facts standing out in the gospel narratives is Jesus' claim to deity. He claimed to be the Christ. He identified Himself in a way that made Him identical with the Father. When Jesus drove the merchants and money changers from the house of Worship, He referred to the Temple as being His Father's house (John 2:16). On another occasion Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). Jesus continually identified Himself with the Son whom the Father sent into the world (John 5:19-47). In another instance Jesus identified Himself with the true Bread that was sent down from heaven by God the Father (John 6:32-40). Space limitation forbids citing scores of other references which identify Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

In Jesus' claim to be Christ, He acknowledged that He was both the God of David and the Son of David at one and the same time. This appears to be a paradox, and ordinarily such a claim could not be supported. This case, however, is unique. The apparent paradox can be explained by the virgin birth, and apart from this there is no explanation. The whole passage proves

¹⁵Sabiers, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, p. 53.

beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus believed Himself to be the virgin born Messiah, The Christ, and not only so, He expected others to believe the same. He discharges His entire ministry with the assumption that His miraculous birth is an accepted fact. He assumes it. There is no question about it! "Christ always has been God. He was God throughout eternity, so in this respect He is the God of David, but through the virgin birth, by taking on humanity through Mary His mother, He became the 'Seed of David' — the descendant of 'Son of David' in the flesh. As far as His deity is concerned, He is the God of David, and as far as his humanity is concerned, He is the Son of David. The virgin birth is the only explanation to the problem which the self-righteous Pharisees were not able to understand or figure out." ¹⁶ The basis of their refusal to receive light on this matter was the active sin in their lives and their unwillingness to repent of their sins. The material wealth and advantage which the religious leaders had in their position blinded them to spiritual truth.

It was necessary for Jesus to be born of a human mother so that He could relate Himself to this life. By being so born He became indeed the "Son of David." If Jesus had come into the world through ordinary birth, born of both Mary and Joseph, He would have been only a human being; He could not have been God. This would have nullified the statement that He was the God of David. By ordinary human birth Jesus could not have taken on the double role as son of David and God of David. The strongest evidence in favor of the virgin birth is found in this dual claim. Apart from the virgin birth this dual claim would be a contradiction.

4. *Confirmation of the Virgin Birth by the New Testament Miracles*

One of the most obvious facts about the Bible is that it is a Book of miracles. Both the Old and New Testaments abound in the supernatural work of God. The Bible is a unity. One part is correlated with the other. Taking it as it is makes sense. "A man who cuts the miraculous out of the Bible has no justification outside of himself. Not one shred of evidence has been brought to light within the last hundred years, either out of the earth, or from the monuments, or from the shelves of old libraries; not one single fact has been discovered by the telescope, or by the

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 54.

microscope, or by the spectroscope, or any other instrument of science; not one scintilla of evidence has been found either in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth, to invalidate the historical integrity of a single paragraph of the gospels as they appear in our *Revised Version* of the New Testament." ¹⁷

If this is true, a pertinent question can be raised at this point. On what basis do the liberals discount the miracles and especially the virgin birth? The answer to this question is simple: the objection to the miracles is purely and arbitrarily philosophical. There is no valid evidence whatsoever for depreciating a single Bible recorded miracle. Liberalism with its intricate system of biblical criticism does not have one biblical foundation on which to stand. The entire destructive system is based upon the prior assumption that God and the Bible can be scientifically analyzed.

A miracle is so-called because it cannot be explained. When a miracle is explained it ceases to be a miracle in the strict sense of the word. Many Bible scholars feel that if a person acknowledges the existence of God, he must logically accept the idea of miracles. Who can explain the origin of God? Is not the existence of God the most baffling mystery and miracle of them all?

The raising of Lazarus from the dead is a miracle as great as the miracle of the virgin birth. Stilling the storm and feeding the five thousand are miracles of great importance. Could not a God, who has power to do these mighty works, also bring forth His own Son through a virgin birth?

The Incarnation of God's Son must of necessity have come about by a supernatural act. "If Christ departed from this world in a miraculous manner, it is logical and easy to conclude that He came into this world in a miraculous manner, namely through birth of a virgin mother entirely apart from the influence of a human father, and this is exactly what the Scriptures tell us actually happened. The miraculous manner in which Christ came into the world is in perfect harmony with the many miraculous events which occurred during His earthly life, and is in perfect harmony with the miracles of the resurrection, and ascension which occurred at the close of His earthly life." ¹⁸

¹⁷Chester E. Tugla, *The Case for the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ*, Chicago: Conservative Baptist Fellowship, 1950, p. 19.

¹⁸Sabiers, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, p. 71.

Is there a man who is acquainted with all the patterns of divine behavior? All will agree that such a man does not exist. If this is true, no man can say that a miracle never happened! "Since the virgin birth has not been repeated, it is not a matter on which science can speak. It can only say it is contrary to the usual course of nature which is no more than Joseph knew 1900 years ago. The virgin birth is no more incredible than Jesus Himself, for both depart from the behaviour patterns observable in science and in the human family.

X { "Joseph knew very well that the virgin birth was not according to the usual birth procedure, but believing in God he had no difficulty in accepting the miracle when assured by God. Those who reject the virgin birth are supported by neither history nor science; but in that rejection they reject the Christian God as set forth in the teachings of Jesus." ¹⁹

The God of the Bible is the God of miracles. The God of miracles is the God to whom Jesus constantly referred. Jesus associated Himself with the God of miracles by performing miracle works for God. Performing miracle works was possible for Jesus because He was divine. Until one shred of evidence is found to the contrary let us hold fast to the blessed doctrine of the virgin birth—the doctrine that gives relevance to the whole spirit of the gospel record. Every miracle recorded in the Bible is declarative verification of the virgin birth.

The whole life of Jesus is one long miracle. He Himself is the supreme Miracle. Why hastily conclude, then, that in the manner of His birth, there could have been nothing supernatural, nothing differentiating Him from mankind at large? Edwin Lewis says, "The miracle of the Person carries with it, by sheer force of the law of congruity, every other miracle. It is inevitable that the adoption of a purely humanitarian Christology should retire from the thought of men such questions as the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection. If we are to have *these* we must have *him*, and we must have *him* as in the faith of the Church he has already been held to be—the Son of God Incarnate. But if we do have *him*, then we can have *these* too: indeed, we might say that they take on a certain inevitability." ²⁰

¹⁹Tulga, *The Case for the Virgin Birth of Christ*, p. 22.

²⁰Edwin Lewis, *A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation*, New York: Harper and Bros., 1940, p. 202.

It can be pointed out that the earliest critics of "The Christian religion did not deny the reality of Christ's miracles. The Jews were bitterly opposed, but the earliest Jewish references to them do not deny that they took place. They admit their historicity, but explain them as the devil's work."²¹ Some of the Greek critics also admitted that they took place but ascribed them to magic.

5. *Confirmation of the Virgin Birth by the Writings of Paul*

Next to Jesus Christ, Paul stands out as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, contributor to New Testament knowledge. Luke was a fellow worker with Paul, and it is certain that they shared with each other any and all divinely inspired information. "There are about one hundred words in the New Testament which are used only by Paul and Luke, and it would seem that the proof is well-nigh complete that Paul was acquainted with Luke's Gospel."²²

Luke comes out clear and strong on the matter of the virgin birth. Luke believed that the prophet Isaiah and others spoke of a virgin-born Messiah (Saviour) and that Jesus Christ was indeed the Redeemer referred to by the prophets. Both Luke and Paul were learned men — the Ph.D.'s of their day. Both were well-grounded and rooted in the Holy Oracles of the Jews. It is true that Paul does not touch directly upon the virgin birth, but the things he says about Jesus Christ make the virgin birth essential to His deity.

The fact that Paul insists upon the sinlessness of Christ is definitely related to his conception of the Redeemer as a supernatural person. In his letter to the Romans, Paul clearly declared Jesus "to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). In Paul's epistle to the Colossian Christians he states that "in him (Jesus) dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). To Timothy, Paul states categorically that "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (I Timothy 3:16).

²¹Pieters, *The Facts and Mysteries of the Christian Faith*, p. 105.

²²Richard J. Cooke, *Did Paul Know of the Virgin Birth?* New York: The Macmillan Co., 1926, p. 132.

It is obvious that no naturally born man could assume the characteristics and qualities here enumerated. "Paul teaches that every son of Adam has been corrupted in his nature by Adam's sin but that Jesus is an exception to this universal corruption . . . Paul states that the seat of sin is in the flesh, e.g., corrupt human nature, which not being under the law of the Spirit is antagonistic to God. This tainted human nature is universal for it has expressed itself in universal sin."²³

It is Paul's conviction that if men are to be saved from their sins it must come about by One in the human race who takes on a fleshly body, but *One* who has not shared in the fallen nature of Adam and Eve. The One who meets this qualification is designated by Paul as Jesus Christ, the Lord from heaven (I Corinthians 15:45-47). Paul calls Him the Son of God (singular), and makes careful distinction between this person and the "Sons of God" (plural) by adoption (Romans 8:14-17).

All of Paul's writings give credence to the doctrine of the virgin birth. In no place does he cast one shadow of doubt or question as to the divine nature of Jesus Christ. Paul merely assumed that the people to whom he was writing knew about and believed the doctrine of the virgin birth. If this were not true, Paul would have been the first to deal with it in a straightforward manner, even as he dealt with questions over which there was a controversy. It is not likely that Paul had any particular reason at all for his silence in regard to the birth of Jesus. It may never have occurred to him that his silence would ever raise any question in the Church, for the simple reason that the mode of the birth of our Lord was not related to nor did it fit into any of the subjects he was writing about to his recently organized churches.

By implication and inference Paul's writings implement the doctrine of the virgin birth as set forth by Matthew and Luke. Not a single statement in Paul's letters can be construed to question this important truth. In all of Paul's writings there appear to be only two references where the context furnishes a suggestion that reference is being made to our Lord's birth from a virgin. They read as follows: "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according

²³Tulga, *The Case for the Virgin Birth of Christ*, p. 31.

to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:3, 4).

In this reference Paul asserts the human and the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is teaching, and his instruction is that, while Jesus was a human resident of earth, the divine in Him was the pre-existent Son of God, which fact was later demonstrated by His resurrection from the dead.

Paul, in his letter to the Galatian church, states that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman under the law, to redeem them that were under the law" (Galatians 4:4, 5). It is clearly discernible that Paul did not make reference to the father, but strictly to the principal in case, namely, the woman who was the Virgin Mary. The law to which Paul refers is the Levitical law having to do with the law of prophecy and the law of Jesus' divine nature. To this law Jesus was amenable — not to the law of the flesh, as such. He ever sought to do the will and work of the Father.

One noted scholar says, "If one approaches the subject on a purely naturalistic premise, then the virgin birth could not have occurred and the hypothesis of a legend to fit Paul's gospel may be the most reasonable assumption. But Paul is not anti-supernaturalistic when it comes to the things of Jesus Christ. He entered the Christian life by a supernatural encounter with the risen Lord Jesus; he glorified in the power of His resurrection; he lived in the blessed hope of His *parousia*. Accordingly, there is nothing in Paul's epistles, Gospel or life which warrants the assumption that a legend must be constructed by Matthew and Luke to account for his teachings. Rather, it is more in accord with Paul's affirmations, his citations of the primitive *kerygma*, and his presuppositions to assume that he, like Luke, received from the first disciples and held as a fact the virgin birth of Jesus."²⁴ Until evidence is presented to the contrary, Paul must remain a member in the group of witnesses giving at least indirect, if not direct, affirmation to the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.

C. EXTRA-BIBLICAL WITNESSES

1. *Confirmation of the Virgin Birth by the Apostles' Creed*

The *Apostles' Creed* is perhaps the best known statement of historical Christianity. It is as well-known as the Lord's Prayer

²⁴William Childs Robinson, "Paul on the Birth of Jesus," *Christianity Today*, March 15, 1963, p. 9.

and is used as a part of the worship service in churches all over the world. It comes to us out of the dim and distant past in essence — from apostolic times. The basic concepts, at least, come to us from the early formative years of the Christian church.

Dr. J. Gresham Machen, one of the greatest Bible scholars of all time, in speaking of the *Apostles' Creed*, points out that "the form of that creed which we use today was produced in Gaul in the fifth and sixth centuries, but this Gallican form is based upon an old Roman Baptismal confession, from which it differs for the most part only in minor detail. The virgin birth appears as clearly in the older form of the creed as in the Gallican form . . . The use of the creed by Tertullian (North Africa) and Irenaeus (Asia Minor and Gaul) pushes the date well back toward the middle of the second century."²⁵

The *Apostles' Creed* is made up of concise statements relative to the fundamentals of the Christian faith and was used extensively by the early church as a credal statement. The oldest form available to us dates back to about 140 A.D., and in this early form there is found a clause "who was born of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary." This creed was used by the early church as a bulwark against heresies and the heathen influences of that day.

An affirmation of faith in the virgin birth was important to the Christians who were close to the formative period of the early church. We would endorse Douglas Edward's judgment that "had it not been for the virgin birth it is highly improbable that the doctrine of the Incarnation would have ever gained a prominent lodging in the human mind."²⁶ If it was important in this early period, then it is no less important for the church in this generation. Many Christian scholars are convinced that the church is in desperate need of its fundamental truths and that when we rationalize away the virgin birth we remove the keystone supporting and holding together all of the Christian doctrines. Apart from the virgin birth, Jesus was a mere man and in no better position to save us from our sins than any other man.

2. *Affirmation of the Virgin Birth by the Church Fathers*

The Church Fathers were in agreement as to the historicity and validity of the virgin birth. "In the creed-like formulas of

²⁵Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, p. 3.

²⁶Thomas Boslooper, *The Virgin Birth*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962.

the churches the statement of the virgin birth had its place from so early a date and along so many different lines of ascent as to force upon us the conclusion that already before death of the last apostles the virgin birth of Christ must have been among the rudiments of the faith in which every Christian was initiated . . . Irenaeus, writing, as he tells us, when Eleutherus was bishop of Rome, i.e., not later than A.D. 190, assures us of the place the virgin birth held in the traditions of the whole church . . . In the creed of Tertullian . . . a little later than Irenaeus, the virgin birth holds the same secure and prominent place. 'The rule of faith,' he says, is altogether one, single, unalterable: the rule that is of believing in one God Almighty, the maker of the world; and His Son Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, etc. . . . Justin Martyr passed before Barchochbas' revolt (A.D. 132-6) from his Samaritan home in Palestine to Ephesus, and from Ephesus to which he gives his *Apologies* (c. 150) and *Dialogue*, have sometimes a creed-like ring; and in these creed-like summaries the virgin birth holds the same conspicuous place as in those of Irenaeus."²⁷

Justyn Martyr regarded "the virgin birth as of fundamental importance and defends it at length against Jewish and pagan objections."²⁸ Another great witness to the virgin birth is found in "Aristides, whose 'Apology' may perhaps be dated at about A.D. 140, regarded the virgin birth as one of the fundamental facts of Christianity . . . Ignatius, bishop of Syrian Antioch, who was martyred not later than A.D. 117, mentions the virgin birth clearly in several passages . . . In one passage the virgin birth forms part of a summary of the chief facts about Christ which is of the same general character as the summary which we detected in Justyn Martyr . . . Ignatius, (A.D. 190) clearly gives the impression that in his day the virgin birth was far beyond the reach of controversy, both in Antioch and in Asia Minor. Other errors had to be combated, but not an error which would make Jesus the son of Joseph by ordinary generation."²⁹

A reading of the Church Fathers produces conclusive evidence that the early Christians accepted the virgin birth as an established fact. The question might well be raised: are we

²⁷Charles Gore, *Dissertations on the Incarnation*, London: John Murray Co., 1907, p. 42.

²⁸Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, p. 5.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 6.

to believe the testimony of the people who lived in and shortly after the apostolic period, or should we believe the rationalist who predicates his judgment upon pure speculation? Should we believe Iraenaëus, Tertullian, Justyn Martyr and Ignatius — men who lived within breathing distance of the apostolic period, or should we believe the proponents of liberalism who base all of their conclusions upon pseudo-scientific assumptions? How are we to deal with the straight-forward testimony of Ignatius (A.D. 110), living at the very brink of the apostolic period? What are we to do with the Christian philosopher Aristides of Athens (A.D. 126), who, in his *Apology* makes reference to the virgin birth and its place in the creed of the church of his day? It can be pointed out that “when extant Christian literature (outside of the New Testament) first became abundant, the virgin birth may easily be shown to have had as firm a place in the belief of the Church as it had at any subsequent time There can be no doubt, then, that at the close of the second century the virgin birth of Christ was regarded as an absolutely essential part of Christian belief by the Christian Church in all parts of the known world The very fact that at the close of the second century there was such a remarkable consensus among all parts of the Church would show that the doctrine was no new thing, but must have originated long before.”³⁰

Modern critics point out that the doctrine of the virgin birth was challenged by Cerinthus, Celsus, Trypho the Jew, the Ebonites and Marcion, but suffice it to say that all of these were radical extremists. They were the antagonists of their day. Cerinthus was a Jew living in Alexandria, Egypt, who insisted upon the Jewish ceremonial law and subscribed to the various agnostic sects. The Jew Trypho doubted that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. Celsus rationalizes that Jesus was “the fruit of an adulterous union of Mary with a certain soldier whose name was Pantheras.” This story along with those in the Talmud are equally ridiculous and need no further comment. We mention them only to show how the perverted mind can go to evil extremes.

The Ebonites represented a group that had deteriorated “from the original apostolic standpoint towards pre-Christian

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 3.

Judaism. There was no originator of the heresy such as the 'Ebion' whom the Fathers imagined." ³¹

Marcion was a Gnostic propagandist who taught "that the God of the Old Testament was an inferior, imperfect Being, in contrast with the good God of the New Testament, and who believed in the essential evil of matter. He could not, therefore, in consistency with his principles, allow that Jesus was, I do not say supernaturally born, but born at all. Marcion drew up for himself a Canon which included one Gospel — that of Luke — and ten Epistles of Paul. But his Gospel of Luke had not the first two chapters. It began at the third chapter: 'In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberias.'" ³² How anyone could take seriously Marcion's attempts to discredit Jesus is indeed very difficult to understand.

Dr. Machen observes that "the doctrine (of the virgin birth) was indeed denied by isolated sects . . . but the sects that denied the virgin birth were at any rate altogether excluded from the main body of the church." Dr. Machen concludes by saying that "the early denials of the virgin birth by the opponents of Christianity have no weight whatever against the historicity of the event. The opponents presuppose the Christian doctrine, and have no historical tradition of their own to substitute for it. The mere fact of their opposition is of no importance whatever, for it is only what was to be expected. Unless they were to become Christians, they could hardly accept the virgin birth of Christ." ³³

³¹Gore, *Dissertation on the Incarnation*, p. 52.

³²James Orr, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, New York: Charles Scribners and Sons, 1907, p. 46.

³³Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, p. 11.

Things Dependent Upon the
Virgin Birth

III.

Things Dependent Upon the Virgin Birth

A. THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ is either divine as the biblical record pictures Him or else He was one of the biggest impostors the world has ever seen. If He was divine, as the Bible claims He was, and as He Himself acknowledged, He could not have been "just" a man. If He was divine as all regenerated Christians have experienced Him, He could not have been born in the ordinary way through a human father and mother. If He was divine, He had an origin somewhat different from other men born of the flesh.

It is the belief of conservative, Bible-loving and believing Christians that Christ was divine — that He was holy and that His holiness was directly related to His intimate affinity with the Holy Spirit. They believe further, that this intimate relationship to the Holy Spirit was unique — that it was different from the relationship of a mere man to the Holy Spirit. This divine relationship was evident and obvious from the day of Jesus' birth. The relationship which man has with the Holy Spirit does not become patent until he has been "transformed into a creature of light," until he has been saved from his sins and converted by the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost.

Jesus referred to Himself often as the son of God. To Philip He said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). To the disciples Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). To Jesus, Simon Peter confessed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16:16). God the Father's voice from heaven proclaimed, "This is My Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Even the evil spirits acknowledged Jesus' divinity. They cried out, saying, "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?" (Matthew 8:29).

On another occasion "unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God" (Mark 3:11). Paul calls Jesus the "only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (I Timothy 6:15). Other Scriptures could be cited to show that Jesus was truly divine. If we accept the proposition that Jesus Christ was divine — that He was truly the Son of the living God, then we must look for an answer to His Advent. That Jesus once did live upon the earth is a fact so well attested that no person in his right mind would deny it.

Now, then, could God become incarnate in human flesh? Many Christian writers have pointed out that the only way a divine personality could come into the world in human flesh is by way of the miraculous. It is evident and obvious that the divinity of Jesus necessitates the virgin birth exactly as the prophets and the gospel writers tell us (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:20).

The contention that Jesus was divine as any human being is divine is a conclusion compatible only with the Unitarian interpretation. "If Jesus is a product of the evolutionary process (see Chapter IV, C), if He was the flower of Hebrew culture, if He inherited the nature of man, if He suffered from delusions of grandeur in announcing His return to the earth; if His deity is an achievement of spiritual experience rather than a unique deity by nature — then of course He was not and need not be born of a virgin."¹

Conservative Christians believe and insist that the virgin birth is compatible with the Bible interpretation of the deity of Christ. The apostate view that Jesus was born of a human father and mother is absolutely foreign to any and all parts of the Bible. There is not one Scripture reference, if taken in the spirit of text and context, that could be construed to affirm the assertion of liberalism. If Jesus was born as the liberals say He was, then we must apologize to the Jews and tell them that they were right when they accused Jesus of blasphemy for making Himself God (John 10:33).

It is indeed blasphemy when any human being born of earthly father and mother claims himself to be divine — claims Himself to be God. "To deny the virgin birth is to give the Jews grounds for rejecting the deity of Christ. It is therefore in

¹Tulga, *The Case for the Virgin Birth of Christ*, p. 47.

the interests of the full New Testament meaning of deity that we contend for the virgin birth.”² No statement could be more exact and to the point than Luke’s statement regarding the angel’s message to Mary — “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

B. THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST

On numerous occasions Jesus Christ affirmed the fact that He was the Lord. The clear meaning of the word “Lord” has to do with “The Supreme Being” or God of the Universe.

The English word “Lord” comes from the Greek word *Kurios*. As used in the New Testament and the *Septuagint* it means, “The Divine or Supreme Being.” The word “Lord” in the English Old Testament comes from the Hebrew consonants YHWH. In both the Old Testament and New Testament the word “lord” has to do with deity. (The word “lord” also has other meanings e.g., master, etc.)

On one occasion Jesus affirmed that “the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath” (Luke 6:5). Paul clearly states “that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (I Corinthians 12:3). In other words, Jesus Christ does not become the Lord above all to a man until he is born of the Holy Ghost. Then and only then does Jesus Christ become the one and only Lord over all things.

The New Testament presents Jesus as Lord in all of its twenty-seven books. He is Lord by Virtue of His eternal existence with the Father (John 1:1); by Virtue of His unique Sonship which distinguishes Him from all other men (John 3:16); by Virtue of His pre-eminence in creation (John 1:1-2).

Since He is the purpose of creation (Colossians 1:16), He is the Lord of History. As the Head of the church He is the Lord of the church (Colossians 1:18). He will become the Lord of the world and the Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16). Jesus as Lord, in the New Testament is always the Virgin Born, miracle-working, sinless, living and returning Christ. Nowhere does any writer intimate that any being other than the New Testament Christ is to be called Lord.”³ When Liberalism makes reference to the Lordship of Christ, it makes reference to an “imaginary

²*Ibid.*, p. 47.

³*Ibid.*, p. 54.

Christ." Reference is not made to the New Testament Christ but to the "Christ of speculative higher criticism." Dr. Chester E. Tulga, in a review, quotes a leading liberal. This liberal says that Christ's knowledge was limited to "such knowledge as could normally have been available to a man of Jesus' time, place and circumstances." He states further that Jesus' outlook was limited to "such breadth of comprehension and depth of insight as could occur in a genuine human spirit of that day." As to Jesus' limitation of divine indwelling and divinity, this same liberal states, "It is a mistake to claim that in Jesus the whole being of God was present: that God's purpose was fully expressed through him. If we are to be in earnest with the assertion of Jesus' humanity, we must recognize that only such a Being and purpose of God found expression in and through him as was appropriate and possible for one of his heritage, his era, his span of experience." From this it can be concluded that "the Lord of the liberals is a human being like ourselves, but more godlike."⁴

If Jesus was indeed born in the natural way of a human father and mother, then we must concede to the liberals that they are right! But alas, there is no evidence whatsoever that compels us to concede that Jesus Christ is the Christ of philosophy, of higher criticism and of the evolutionary process. It is quite clear from the biblical record that Jesus Christ was indeed virgin born. The Lordship of Jesus Christ is dependent upon it.

C. THE SAVIOURHOOD OF JESUS CHRIST

If Jesus Christ was the One of whom the Angel of the Lord said, "Thou shalt call his name *Jesus*: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21), He was by necessity a higher being than a mere human. People in all ages have tried to work out some system of salvation, but all humanistic efforts in this direction have failed. This is true simply because two men in a well both face the same predicament. One cannot rescue the other because they are both in the well. So it is with this matter of seeking for a Saviour from amongst our own ranks. Who is there in history or in our present day who can stand up and claim to be the Saviour of the world? Obviously, none can make this claim. This then eliminates a mere human being from being our Saviour! There is One, however, who stands out over the wrecks of time who can and does say unto us, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 55.

and "if any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (Matthew 11:28; John 7:37). Who is this One who can present such claims and promises? He is not an ordinary man — rather He is Jesus Christ who is represented in the Scriptures as being virgin born.

Why is Jesus Christ able to offer us such hope and assurance? It is simply because He is divine. He is the Lord of the universe. Of Himself, Jesus said, "All authority hath been given me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Jesus Christ could offer salvation to every man because of His divine relationship to God the Father. He had at His command all of the divine resources. Could a mere man do this? Obviously not, because no man has such authority, and no man has in his possession resources sufficiently propitious for salvation.

What then was the distinguishing mark between Jesus Christ and a mere man? It was simply this — Jesus was divine. He was supernaturally manifested through the Virgin Mary to take away the sins of the world. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost and not by relationship of man with woman.

"The Saviour of the New Testament is a supernatural person, born of a Virgin, sinless in life, atoning in death, victorious in resurrection and glorious in His return to rule the world. No honest student of the New Testament can teach otherwise."⁵

In light of the fact that Christ the Saviour possessed resources and powers beyond a mere human being, it can be assumed that His Saviourhood is dependent upon the miraculous virgin birth.

D. THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

One of the outstanding events occurring near the close of Christ's earthly ministry was His bodily resurrection. The Scriptures plainly tell us that Jesus Christ died, that He was buried and that He arose from the grave in a bodily form. In the light of this historical evidence the question must be raised: Is there any evidence whatsoever that a mere man came forth from the grave in a resurrected body? The answer to this question is no! In the light of this question and answer another question must be raised: What was the underlying principle for the bodily resurrection? It is obvious that Jesus Christ performed a unique act because He was divine, and being divine He was something more than mere man. He was divine, and by virtue of His divinity He must have come into this world in some other way

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 52.

than a birth effected through a human father and mother. There is only one explanation for Jesus' bodily resurrection, and that is that He was miraculously born of the Virgin Mary. The bodily resurrection is obviously dependent upon the virgin birth. "For hundreds of years some of the world's greatest Bible scholars found the accounts of the resurrection convincing and satisfying, and they believed in a supernatural Christ born of a supernatural birth."⁶

E. THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

The acceptance of Jesus' Second Coming by those who have experienced Him in His saving power is universal. Conservative Christians are committed to the acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ in all of His supernatural aspects, and in so accepting Him, they affirm and subscribe to the virgin birth. "If Jesus is 'the only begotten Son of God' and not the son of Joseph, then His announcement of His own personal return has a different value entirely. If He existed on an equality with the Father before the world was, as the Scriptures assert, then it is certain that He can return to the world again if He so wills. A virgin-born Jesus can be a returning Jesus. A mere human Christ, born only of human parents, and dying a human death, is a Christ who cannot fulfill the promise to return. If Jesus was born of human parents then the liberals are right in rejecting His apocalyptic teachings as the teachings of a mistaken enthusiast. Only the virgin-born Jesus is the returning Jesus."⁷

The teachings on the Second Coming are clearly presented in the biblical record. Jesus' Second Coming is definitely dependent upon His divine relationship with the Father in heaven. Jesus promises to come back the second time, and there is definite relationship between the apocalyptic phases of Jesus' life and His virgin birth. The only hope the world has for a Second Coming of Christ is built around the One who was born of the Virgin Mary. Apart from this there is no hope of His coming again. The Second Coming of Christ is indeed dependent upon the virgin birth.

F. THE NEW BIRTH OF A BELIEVER

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is indeed the wonder of wonders. No other event has left such an imprint upon the world as did the birth of Christ. Our dating system is built

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 58.

around the great event at Bethlehem. A letter cannot be written, nor can a check be drawn without one being reminded that almost 2000 years ago the Incarnation took place.

The greatness of this event cannot be denied, but there is an event that is equally marvelous, and that is the heart experience of a penitent sinner who confesses his sins and comes to Christ. "Christ's coming and abiding with the Virgin Mary is a fact at which we marvel! But has the reader ever realized that there is a manner in which Christ comes and abides within each and every true Christian believer? This very thing actually occurs. The Scriptures clearly teach that Christ lives within every person who has experienced the 'second birth.'" ⁸

In order to avoid misunderstanding it must be pointed out that Christ dwelt in the Virgin Mary in a different way from that in which He dwells in a believer. "Christ's abiding within the Christian has to do with the spiritual realm, while His abiding within the Virgin Mary had to do with the physical realm, the purpose of which was that He might be born of her as the God-Man and thus be a properly qualified Redeemer which would enable Him to accomplish the work of 'redemption.' Another 'virgin birth' will never again be necessary because Christ has finished the work of 'redemption' once and for all, thus Christ will never again abide within anyone in the physical realm as He did within Mary. His coming and abiding within Christians in the spiritual realm is a matter that vitally concerns each and every human being." ⁹

There can be no doubt about Christ's living in the heart of the believer. Paul stated categorically, "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). Of his own experience he said, "Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). On another occasion Paul said, "Christ . . . is our life" (Colossians 3:4). John stated, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I John 5:12). These and other Scriptures clearly teach the mystical relationship of Christ's indwelling in the believer.

Now the question can be raised: Is it possible for a mere man to live and abide in another man in the way in which Scripture claims that Christ dwells in believers? The answer is obviously in the negative. Why, then, is it possible for Christ

⁸Sabiers, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, p. 78.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 78.

to dwell in the hearts of men? It must be because He is something more than a mere man; He has a second quality, a certain something that enables Him to do that which mere man cannot do. That certain quality is: deity, and He was able to bring His divine self into the earth, not by way of a natural birth, but by the supernatural way — through the conception of the Holy Ghost in the Virgin Mary. From this it can be readily seen that the new birth of a believer is definitely dependent upon the virgin birth. Only a virgin born Christ can effect this mystical new-birth relationship in the believer's heart. As the virgin birth of Christ was supernatural and from above, so the new birth experience of the believer is supernatural and from above. The new birth experience is dependent upon the virgin birth of Christ.

G. THE SON RELATIONSHIP OF JESUS TO GOD THE FATHER

Many people today are asking: Does it make any difference if Joseph was or was not the father of Jesus? Those who accept the Bible as the inerrant and infallible Word of God may be surprised to know that some ministers as well as teachers of religion insist that the virgin birth of Jesus Christ is not essential or relevant to His deity. Those of this persuasion would limit the definition of deity to mean that Jesus was divine in the same sense that we mortals can be divine. They would deny the unique Son relationship of Jesus to God the Father.

Dr. I. M. Haldeman, a well-known scholar, insists that it does make a difference as to whether Joseph was the earthly father of Jesus. He says: "If our Lord Jesus Christ were begotten of a human father; as Joseph protested he was not that father, then *Jesus Christ was born of a mother stained with the sin of unchastity*. If our Lord Jesus Christ were begotten by a natural father, and that father was not Joseph; as Mary was betrothed to him, and in the eye of the law as solemnly bound as a married woman, in giving birth to *Jesus she became as guilty as a wife who breaks her marriage vow*.

"If Jesus were begotten by a natural father; as that father was not Joseph; as that natural father has never been known, then Jesus was begotten by an unknown father of an unmarried woman; as the child of an unmarried woman and unknown father is both illegitimate and bastard, He whom we call the Son of God entered the world with the bar sinister of His mother's unchastity and faithlessness, stamped with the seal of an unknown

father's cowardice, and stands before men as *an illegitimate and bastard son, having no legal or decent right to live.*

If our Lord Jesus Christ were begotten by a natural father; as personality comes not from the mother, but from the father (Hebrews 7:9, 10), He was the seed of the man and not the seed of the woman. If He were not the seed of the woman, the promise made at Eden's gate that such a seed should bruise the serpent's head has never been fulfilled; and whatever else Jesus of Nazareth may be, He is not that seed.

"If our Lord Jesus Christ were begotten by a natural father; if, as is true, personality comes from the father, the personality of Jesus was natural. If he were a natural person, He was not God. If He were not God (and since forgiveness of sin belongs only to God) He had no right to forgive sin. He had no right to make Himself the object of faith and the issue of salvation. As He claimed the right to forgive sin and to consign to eternal wrath all who did not believe in Him, He was either a wanton deceiver or a blindly deceived man. In either case, as mental weakling or moral degenerate, He would stand outside the category of a Redeemer and Saviour of men.

"If our Lord Jesus Christ were not begotten by God the Father of the very seed of the woman; if the act of God were not an absolute generative act; if the generative act were that of a natural man and the conception wholly natural, *our Lord Jesus Christ is reduced to the level of a merely natural man.* If He were a natural man; if He were not true and real God; if He were not God of God, the very God, God the Son as well as Son of God, *He was not the second person of the Trinity.* If He were not the second person of the Trinity the question may be asked: Who is the second person of the Trinity?

"To this, under the circumstances, there can be only one answer: No one is! If there is no second person of the Trinity — there is no Trinity. Thus, *if Jesus of Nazareth had only a natural father, the doctrine of a triune God, the doctrine that God subsists as three distinct persons in one undivided substance or being, falls to the ground and the church is landed into the front yard of open Unitarianism.*¹⁰

¹⁰The drift into Unitarianism and Universalism in some denominations is quite evident. Much of the devotional literature today minimizes the importance of praying "in Jesus' Name." The name Jesus is frequently omitted altogether, especially in some denominational papers and Sunday school literature.

"If our Lord Jesus Christ were begotten by a natural father; if as the son of such a father His personality was only natural; as a natural person is not infinite; as only an infinite person can atone to an infinite person; as only God can satisfy the law, the government and being of God; and since our Lord (as begotten by a natural father) could not be God and was no more at any time than a finite person, He could not offer atonement to God. If, therefore, the father of Jesus were a natural man, *the death of our Lord on the cross was not an atoning sacrifice*. This is true upon the side of His personality. It is true upon the side of His humanity. It is true in this wise:

"To be an acceptable victim for sacrifice, to fill the function of a substitute, our Lord Jesus Christ must be free from the penalty of sin. To be free from the penalty of sin He must be sinless, not only in deed, but in essence and nature. A sinless humanity can be produced only from a sinless father; but, if our Lord Jesus Christ were begotten by a natural man, He was begotten by a sinful father. If He were begotten by a sinful father, He inherited His sinful nature. He would have sin in Him. He would be under the penalty of sin. Under the penalty of sin, He could neither be a substitute for sinners, nor yet a sacrifice for sin.

"If it could be proven that Jesus had a natural father (and as the son of such a father could die neither as a substitute nor sacrifice) it would be plainly proven that the cross was a bloody, brutal, barbarous, useless murder, without the basis of a single principle, without profit to man, and without glory to God. If our Lord Jesus Christ were begotten by a human father; if as a natural son, with a natural personality and a nature of sin, He could not offer an atoning sacrifice, nor act as a substitute, it would be evident, since God alone can raise the dead, *in failing to be true and actual God, He could not fulfill His own promise that after laying down His life He would take it up again*; it would be evident that He could not of Himself raise Himself from the dead. And further, as God the Father is said to have raised Him and the Holy Spirit is said to have raised Him, and it is said He should raise Himself; and the Father and the Spirit represented as cooperating with the personal power of the Son to raise Himself, since He was natural man and not God, He could not cooperate with the Father and the Spirit in a supernatural act; and as His failure to so cooperate would break down the Scrip-

ture doctrine of the invariable coordination of the Trinity — resurrection could not take place — *He never was raised from the dead.*

“If Jesus our Lord had only a natural father, the Trinity, as already shown, does not exist. All therefore that is predicated of the Trinity, as such, utterly fails, and there is no honest evidential warrant for believing in the ordained, consummative work of the Trinity; that is to say, the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth as the thus declared Son of God.

“If Jesus had only a natural father, the logical consequence of His natural sonship vitiates any pretended evidence that He is alive today. Immortality has not been brought to light; and we stand on the edge of the grave with only night and silence. *It makes a great difference who was the father of Jesus.*

“If God the Father did not stoop down from heaven, and in prime accord with the Son as His verbal and external expression, and through the co-ordinate and covenant operation of the Holy Spirit take hold on a cell or seed of the Virgin Mary, creating a new and distinct human nature which the Son of God took into union with Himself, becoming a unique being with two natures human and divine in one body and with one personality forever, then the whole foundation and fabric of Christianity as set forth in the New Testament is completely overthrown.

“The men who deny the virgin birth; who do so that they may the more easily be delivered from carrying the baggage of the miraculous; who shift the fatherhood of Jesus from the eternal God to the act of some unknown and sinful man, are paying a dear price for their jaunty endeavor to accommodate the supernaturalism of Christianity to the poverty-smitten weakness of their own faith, and the noisy clamor of an unbelieving, spiritually ignorant and scoffing world.”¹¹ Thus it is: As Jesus is reduced to a mere man, a sinner man, humanity becomes more and more involved in the “quicksand of sin and its resultant immorality, from which there is no deliverance apart from the virgin born, divine Son of God who is able to save from all sin.”

¹¹I. M. Haldeman, “Does It Make Any Difference? or The Question of the Virgin Birth,” *Book Bulletin* published by Christian Evidence League, Malverne, N. Y.

Conclusion

IV.

Conclusion

A. VIRGIN BIRTH – THE KEYSTONE

The evidence presented shows that the virgin birth of Christ is the foundation, the keystone that holds together all the doctrines related to our blessed Lord. "We may dismiss altogether the contention of many that whether true or not the fact is of no great importance. It must be of importance. No fact in which the relationship of Jesus to His ancestors according to the flesh, to His mother, to the laws of life in the race at large, are so evidently and so deeply involved can possibly be a matter of indifference. The nature of His experience in the world, the quality and significance of His manhood, the fundamental constitution of His person, the nature and limits of the incarnation are necessary and vitally concerned in the discussion. It is impossible to begin with the acceptance or rejection of the fact and arrive by logical processes at like convictions on any fundamental matter in the region of Christology."¹

The virgin birth of Christ was an accepted fact among the New Testament writers, and this is clearly revealed in the birth stories as found in Matthew and Luke. If there was any skepticism at this point, it certainly would have come out in Luke's gospel. Luke was an educated man, a man of letters, a man with "perfect understanding of all things from the very first." Not only so, but Luke was a physician, well-informed in the matter of biology and the sciences of his day. (For contemporary medical testimony, see Appendix C). Luke does not hesitate to write about the things which were most surely believed by the early Christians (Luke 1:1-4). Luke was an honest man, and he was careful to scrutinize the original sources, viz., "The testimony, written or oral, of eyewitnesses." It is probable that Luke received direct testimony from Mary herself.

¹Louis Matthews Sweet, "The Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1939, p. 3052.

The liberals make much over the fact that Mark does not record the birth narrative. But this "silence" does not prove anything. Mark did not deal with the early years of Christ's life. The birth and early life of Jesus Christ did not come into the scope of Mark's discussion. Mark does not mention Joseph but this is no ground for assuming he never existed. Mark does not deal with the birth of Jesus, but this does not prove that He was not born.

It can be pointed out that Mark wrote to the Romans. The pressing matter at hand did not call for a discussion at this point. His subject was "Jesus the Wonderful," and this involved a discussion of the superhuman power of Jesus as an adult. Sometimes facts are so well-known and so obvious that it is not necessary to mention them. Why carry coal to Newcastle? The silence of Mark proves absolutely nothing. The silence of John on this subject can be readily discounted because John's gospel was the latest of the four gospels, and deals with later events in Jesus' life.

The hypothesis that the birth stories were deliberate inventions foisted upon the church may be completely discounted. "If the story was invented, there must have been a time when Jesus was universally accepted as the son by natural generation of Joseph and Mary. The story surely was not invented before His birth nor for some time after. The first person, therefore, who spoke contrary to the prevalent and natural belief must have had it from the family, which alone knew the truth, or else have been a wanton and lying gossip. Such a story is recognizable on the face of it as authoritative or pure invention. There is no middle ground Moreover, this hypothesis demands that this fabrication must have met with instantaneous success. It passed the scrutiny of the church at large and of its authorized teachers, and was never challenged save by a small group of heretics who disliked it on dogmatic grounds."² Throughout the first 1800 years of church history, the millions who testified to the saving grace of Christ accepted this doctrine as fact.

A minute study of the New Testament books clearly reveals that all of the writers accepted the birth narrative without question. The internal evidence in favor of the virgin birth could not be stronger. "We resort to the simple and convincing principle that the story could not have been honestly composed nor

²*Ibid.*, p. 3053.

honestly published as derived from any source other than the persons who could guarantee its trustworthiness. Every indication, of which the narratives are full, of honesty and intelligence on the part of the narrators is an argument against any and all theories which presuppose a fictitious origin for the central statement.”³

A study with any semblance of scholarship and honesty will not only arrive at the conclusion that Jesus was virgin born, but also that the very foundations of Christ as Saviour and author of our Salvation are dependent upon the keystone — the virgin birth.

It is well to bear in mind that the natural birth ushers into the world a new life, a new personality, a new being. Can this be said of Jesus Christ? The obvious answer is No! Christ was co-existent with the Father from the beginning. “In the beginning was the Word (Christ) and the Word (Christ) was with God (*Elohim*) and the Word (Christ) was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him (Christ) and without him (Christ) was not anything made that was made” (John 1:1-3). Paul in writing to the Ephesian church points out that God “created all things by Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:9). In his letter to the Colossian Christians Paul affirms that “by him (Christ) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: All things were created by him (Christ) and for him (Christ). And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16, 17).

Many other Scriptures could be cited to the end that Jesus Christ was co-existent with the Father from the beginning.

The mystery of the virgin birth was revealed only to Joseph and Mary and it is probable that the aged priest Zacharias and Elizabeth were taken into confidence. Mary and Joseph died with the testimony given in Matthew and Luke, and neither they nor anyone else has repudiated it. Jesus never expected to produce faith in Himself by miracles, much less by capitalizing upon a miracle wrought on Him. Later Mary was among the 120 who prayed in the upper room (Acts 1:14). *Her obedience to tarry in Jerusalem signifies that she believed her Son Jesus to have been divine. With sanctified pride she now witnesses for her Lord.* She is no longer fearful of the reproach that might follow full understanding of her experience. More than once she testified

³*Ibid.*, p. 3054.

to the infancy of Jesus and of how He was conceived by the Holy Ghost. These narratives went from mouth to mouth. A generation later Matthew crystallized them into written form. Luke joined Matthew in giving his account of the birth narrative. At the beginning of the second century the virgin birth was so completely accepted that it was made a statement in the *Apostles' Creed*.

From a purely objective viewpoint, the historical reality of the virgin birth has been proved. There was no question about it in the minds of the early Christians. Only the view of life and the faith of the individual can determine the acceptance of the virgin birth. He who denies that there is a God, or who subscribes to a deistic interpretation, must, as a matter of course, on this basis refuse to assent to the virgin birth. "Or, whoever believes his God capable of 'spiritual' but not of 'natural' miracles, and besides sees in the miraculous birth no meaning and value for the reception of salvation in the person of Christ, necessarily fails in the appreciation of the historical narrative. He must either be content with this lack of discernment or, with new courage search for stronger 'natural' explanations and deductions. On the other hand, belief in God, and in Him as the Lord who, for the sake of man's salvation, wonderfully masters the ways of history as well as of nature, together with the inner religious conviction that the virgin birth is necessary to full understanding of the life of Jesus as Redeemer — this belief allows firm and sincere adoption of the virgin birth as a fact in salvation."⁴

German idealistic philosophy of another day placed a wide gulf between natural and spiritual happenings. Now we have observed materialism and many theologians have turned away from this rationalistic dogmatism. Recent developments in psychology, sociology, history, and religion have compelled scholars to re-evaluate their former position. It has been demonstrated that nature, as the material and the lawful, reaches into all realms of spiritual life and jointly rules their happenings. Belief becomes even stronger that transcendental factors control most elementary events of natural happenings.

Present day scientists can be classified as two distinct groups. The first denies every miracle while the second accepts the proposition that natural and spiritual miracles are possible.

⁴Richard H. Grutzmacher, *The Virgin Birth*, New York: Eaton and Mains, 1907, p. 70.

It is an established fact that the Christian faith is founded on the belief in a divine and sinless Lord and Redeemer. He who has not arrived at this conclusion has not realized the religious experience, which according to primitive Christianity, belongs to faith. People may be religious but not necessarily Christian. Only those who experience Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour are Christians, and only they have a right to testify when it comes to presenting the value and worth of Christian virtues.

Christ's divine nature and His sinlessness are evident on every hand. "The Christ of faith is from his birth divine and holy. Natural birth never produces anything holy and divine, but human and sinful; consequently Jesus' origin must have been miraculous." ⁵

If a person insists that the virgin birth is not essential, we will indeed acknowledge his probable sincerity, but not the truth of his opinion. On the other hand, he who accepts the virgin birth does so with the assurance that he is supported by unprejudiced science. Honest seekers after truth cannot take lightly the fact that "the holy mystery of the Lord's origin became the symbol of the holier mystery of His Divine nature. It thus appears in every one of the historic creeds, an assertion of fact around which the belief of the church crystallized into the faith which alone accounts for its history, a profound and immovable conviction that Jesus Christ was really incarnate Deity." ⁶

The virgin birth is the only means through which our Saviour could have made entry into the world. All of the basic Christian doctrines are related to the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ. All of the Christian doctrines are stones in the redemptive arch of which the doctrine of the virgin birth is the keystone!

The doctrine of the virgin birth has never been accepted by anyone other than true Christians, and it is doubtful if proof can be adduced that will convince others. Those washed in the blood of the Lamb believe that the virgin birth "is indispensable for Christian faith and Christian living." They believe that "it was not man's idea, but God's. In other words, it was a fact first, and a doctrine afterwards The Virgin Birth, being not a notion but an event, stands at the beginning of the Gospel

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁶Sweet, p. 3056.

and in the forefront of the Creed Only in the light of the supreme doctrine of the Incarnation does the significance and authenticity of the Virgin Birth tradition become luminous and sure Only when men have been converted to the truth are their minds set free to see aright. For this reason the only competent judges of the evidence for the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ are those who believe in Jesus as the Divine and human Saviour of the world. Once the mind has responded to the great truth of the Incarnation, the tradition of the Virgin Birth of Jesus makes its own appeal both to the heart and to the reason. The most popular festival is Christmas; and the most popular feature of Christmas is the carol; and the distinctive appeal of the carol depends, to an extent which few perhaps realize, upon the maiden Mother and the miraculous Birth."⁷

In an interview Dr. Basil G. Osipoff, a prominent Bible scholar, pointed out, "Undermine, if you please, the foundations of our historical faith and you will destroy entirely the system of Christian philosophy of life and its entire redemptive potential." This is self-evident. Without the virgin birth there could be no deity of Christ. Without this deity, there could be no resurrection and consequently, no atonement for sin and no redemption.

B. SCIENCE AND THE VIRGIN BIRTH

We are living in an age when science is unlocking for us many of the mysteries of the physical universe and life itself. Great benefits have come to humanity through scientific research and discovery. However, with every good discovery there is an ante-chamber of potential evil. Unless biblical morality and ethics are related and applied to scientific technology there is danger that man may destroy himself. Man has reached a place in his development where he has a tendency to deify science and even man himself and as man rises higher on the "totem pole" of intellectuality, there is a tendency to push Jesus Christ our Lord further down and away from the relevant issues of life. In some quarters it is now popular for sophisticated man to place Jesus Christ our Lord in the same category with ordinary man and even to suggest that He was mistaken in some of His interpretations. This is, of course, not the Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was "conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of

⁷Douglas Edwards, *The Virgin Birth in History and Faith*, London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1941, p. 26.

the Virgin Mary." It is rather a new invention — a humanistic "christ" who was born, not in "the womb of the Virgin Mary" but rather in the "womb of the evolutionary swamp." Some scholars tell us that Jesus Christ, as a historical person, is no longer important for our Christian faith. This is again, we point out, not the Christianity of the Bible, but rather an entirely new religion in which are expressed *some* of the social and moral teachings of the virgin-born Jesus Christ.

A great deal is being said about science and religion and many claim that the two are working out a mutual common-denominator upon which their differences are worked out. This may be true in a limited frame of reference, but in the main, the term "religion" is usually used to mean something entirely different from the traditional redemptive work in Jesus Christ as it is revealed in the Bible. Those with implicit faith in the Bible as the authoritative and dependable Word of God have reason for concern when "religious scientists" and "scientific religionists" make statements which completely disregard and depreciate the biblical witness.

Many conservative scholars recognize in our contemporary religious journals a scientifically created "Post-Christian" religion which could, for want of a better name, be called "Religious Scientism." The Lutheran publication *Dialog* devotes a major part of an issue to a discussion of the "Post-Christian-Era" and concludes that this term has "lost its novel and enigmatic effect upon our ears" and that "it has become a dictum of our consciousness." The editors of a well-known church journal acknowledge that "our seminary generation turns eagerly to Dietrich Bonhoeffer . . . who insisted that 'the world has come of age' and no longer relies upon traditional Christian motif as its guiding force" (*Christian Advocate* Oct. 25, 1962, p. 2).

This new religion acknowledges some of the traditional, moral and ethical content of Christianity but divorces itself almost completely from the idea of "divine intervention" and the "miracle," as reflected in Judeo-Christian revelation. Its criteria is limited to that which can be observed in the crucible of "scientific investigative technique." The basic assumption is that the mystical and the miraculous are vestiges of heathen superstitions and mythology, and thus the doctrine of the virgin birth and other kindred miracles are considered to be untenable in this scientific age. This scientific bias is reflected in such modern

translations of the Bible as the *Revised Standard Version* and the *New English Bible*. Both of these translations down-grade the doctrine of the virgin birth by relegating the idea of the virgin birth to a footnote or by emphasizing the theory that "Joseph was the father of Jesus."

Many informed churchmen are aware that high pressure efforts are being made to superimpose the "bible of science" upon the church. The evidence of this effort is best presented in a recent book, *Science Ponders Religion*, edited by Harlow Shapley. The eighteen chapters in this volume give the conclusions of the members of the "Institute of Religion in an Age of Science." These noted scholars, meeting to synthesize science and religion, tell us: "Science provides the basis for a new testament, a new scientific scripture and truth about man and his destiny." Ralph S. Burhoe was elected to present the general positional agreement of this group. In his chapter entitled, "Salvation in the Twentieth Century," we are told: "In the Judeo-Christian-Moslem religions the theory . . . if you can believe it, is one that either promises the resurrection of the body ultimately, of the departure of the inner self or soul immediately after death, to reward or to punishment . . . these were bold imaginative theories, these doctrines of immortality . . . the rise of modern science stripped him (man) of the capacity to believe in such doctrines of eternal life because the doctrines could not be made to fit with the newer scientific doctrines about the hidden secrets of reality . . . science has pushed man over with one hand and pulled the rug out from under him with the other. This happened not only with regard to religious doctrines of immortality, but science disintegrated many other beliefs"⁸ and we would add, among these other casualties of faith is the doctrine of the virgin birth—the very keystone to the deity and Lordship of Jesus Christ.

In this same book also appear such statements as: "Logical proofs of the existence of a beneficent God are to most scientists meaningless because they cannot accept the assumptions upon which the logic rests,"⁹ And "The creative process of evolution is not to be interrupted by any supernatural intervention,"¹⁰ and

⁸Harlow Shapley (Editor) *Science Ponders Religion*, New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, Inc., 1960, p. 19.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 38.

"The scientist cannot accept supernatural revelation as a way of knowledge."¹¹ It is further acknowledged that "the seeming madness of saying 'scientific religion' can be dispelled only if we are ready to extend the meaning of the term 'religion' beyond some of its traditional connotations."¹² This would indicate that there is a difference between the "scientific" approach and the "biblical" approach. This idea is further elucidated by the editors of *Theology Today* (April 1961) when they quote the "scientific theologian" John Randall as holding that the idea of a "really existing divine Being" is only "a superstitious belief" and has nothing to do with an "enlightened religion."

It is the feeling of many that the theories of science are now being superimposed upon the teachings of the Scriptures and that this has had an adverse effect upon the well-being of the church. It is true, however, that there has been a reaction among some truly objective scientists against the "pseudo-science" which is being promulgated today in the name of true science. Anthony Standen, in his book, *Science Is a Sacred Cow*, suggests that science has been erroneously placed upon a "divine pedestal" so that the non-scientist or layman assumes science to be a "cure-all" for the issues of life. In considering religious matters, including the matter of the virgin birth, it would be well for us to ponder some of Dr. Standen's timely suggestions:

When a white-robed scientist, momentarily looking from his microscope or his cyclatron, makes some pronouncement for the general public, he may not be understood, but at least he is certain to be believed. No one ever doubts what is said by a scientist. Statesmen, industrialists, ministers of religion, civic leaders, philosophers, all are questioned and criticized, but scientists — never. Scientists are exalted beings who stand at the very topmost pinnacle of popular prestige, for they have the monopoly of the formula "It has been scientifically proved" . . . which appears to rule out all possibility of disagreement . . .¹³

The scientist is a man of integrity and faith who trusts the basic laws of nature and intelligence to lead him into paths of truth . . . since it is only human nature to accept such flattery, the scientists accept the layman's opinion about themselves . . . but they themselves would be the first to say that Science is just an abstraction, and that to praise Science is to praise scientists.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹³Anthony Standen, *Science Is a Sacred Cow*, New York: E. P. Sutton and Co., Inc., 1950, p. 13.

... What exactly is this "Science" that is so highly regarded? ... as a series of steps, roughly as follows: the first step is observation. Usually what is observed is the result of a deliberately contrived experiment ... a number of observations are collected, and then the scientist goes into a huddle with himself and forms a hypothesis, that is, a suggested explanation of some sort or other, of the facts that have been observed ... the hypothesis is continually put to the test of experiment, and if it survives a large number of experiments, and can't explain them all, it is promoted to a "theory." A theory is simply a well tested hypothesis, but there is no sharp dividing line.

Even the very best of theories may turn out to be wrong, for tomorrow an experiment may be done that flatly contradicts it ... Scientists suppose that they always remember this faint shadow of doubt that hangs over all their theories, but in practice ... they often forget ... the dreadful *cocksureness that is characteristic* of scientists in bulk is not only quite foreign to the spirit of true science, it is not even justified by a superficial view ... since scientists have such overwhelming confidence in their own ability — in their collective ability, that is to say — it is small wonder that they make no attempt to teach what are the limitations of science, for they hardly recognize any.

Yet there may be limits to what science can do. Consider that question: can science disprove ghosts? ... Surely science has proved that there are no ghosts. And yet, is that so? Suppose ... that ghosts can occasionally appear when the psychological conditions are just right, and suppose that one necessary condition for the appearance of a ghost is the absence of a scientist: well, then, "Science" (that is to say, scientists) would go on investigating ghost after ghost, and would 'disprove' every one of them, and yet ghosts would continue to appear whenever the scientists were not looking.

This is a simple case ... illustrating *the impossibility of proving anything negative by the scientific method*.¹⁴ At least it is enough to show that science is not infallible, and if science has any more serious defects than the ability to perceive an occasional spook in the corner, it is of the utmost importance that citizens generally, should know what they are. Yet, this sort of knowledge is very conspicuously absent, from the populace at large, and from the curriculum of institutes of learning.

Non-scientists don't even know what science can do; scientists are so obsessed with the part of success and future possibilities of their

¹⁴It follows that science is not in a position to declare that the virgin birth did not happen. It is a unique occurrence and is entirely removed from the category in which scientific investigation can and does operate. Any denial of the virgin birth is purely philosophical.

own specialty that they have no idea what the proper field of science in general is and no recognition that there are any limits . . . they come to think that Science with a capital "S" . . . the scientific method — is the universal cure-all for mankind. They are wrong, for science is not a cure-all. The claims of science fiends are preposterously exaggerated. Science has many important limitations . . . the idea that science is infallible and beyond criticism, is a delusion, and even a dangerous one . . . hardly anyone is able to recognize science for what it is, the great Sacred Cow of our time.¹⁵

We believe that spiritual perception is possible only for the spiritually initiated. The Bible speaks of the natural or unregenerate man thus: "But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel . . . (Micah 4:12); For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3). Paul, in his address to the Christians at Corinth, a center of intellectuality, says, "Now we (born-again ones) have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man (sinner) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Corinthians 2:12-14).

The Bible clearly teaches that there are two opposing forces in the world, Christ and Satan, and that between these two forces there is conflict. Because of sin, man is a fallen creature, and in his unregenerate state, lacks spiritual knowledge and insights. It is only after man is "born of the Spirit" that he attains spiritual dimension; until he is "born again," spiritual entities are foolishness unto him. Therefore let us recognize the nature of this conflict. Those who are "born again" and possess the Spirit of God will be stimulated and edified by the Spirit. Let us not fret ourselves because of what sinners have to say about spiritual things, but let us rather pray that they, too, may be converted and come into a spiritual relationship with God. Those who have experienced the miracle of the "new birth" have no problem with the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. The recurrent effort to

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 13ff.

"square" the virgin birth with science is as futile as the search for the "fountain of youth" and as lacking in philosophical insight. It is only by spiritual insight that man becomes alert to spiritual truth. The statement by Jesus to Peter is most appropriate at this point: "Blessed art thou, Simon, Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17).

C. EVOLUTION AND THE VIRGIN BIRTH

In this day of "sophisticated scholarship" it is popular for some scholars, especially the theistic evolutionists, to pass judgment upon the validity of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. It is not so much a question of whether the virgin birth is valid, but rather whether the Bible is valid and is indeed the authoritative Word of God. It is claimed by some that man is the product of an evolutionary process and that the Bible is a book of history written by man in an age when the human race lived under a burden of ignorance and superstition. For this reason, it is claimed that the Bible needs to be re-examined and subjected to a scientific investigation. It is alleged that those things of a miraculous nature, which man cannot reduce to a mathematical formula or a chemical process must be weeded out.

This view, obviously, does not take into account the fact that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" and that "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Since the doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ is one which does not respond to laboratory verification, it is discounted along with the other miracles as a vestige of the ignorance and superstition characterizing primitive man.

In the early 19th century Charles Darwin was preparing for the Christian ministry. When writing to his second cousin, at the death of her sister, Darwin said: "As far as anyone can, by his own good principles and religion, be supported under such a misfortune, you, I am assured, will know where to look for such support. And after so pure and holy a comfort as the Bible affords, I am equally assured how useless the sympathy of all friends must appear, although it be heartfelt and sincere."

Years passed and young Darwin's mind began to drift away from the biblical faith once so wonderfully expressed in a letter. During his voyage on *The Beagle* his thoughts were directed to naturalistic channels. In 1859 (after twenty years) Darwin

published a book: *On the Origin and Species by Means of Natural Selection*. The hypothesis thus projected became known as "natural selection evolution." The idea of "natural selection" became an obsession to Darwin, so much so that the more he examined nature, the less evidence he saw of supernatural design, for natural selection seemed to him to account for just about everything. He began to question the accuracy of the Old and New Testaments. Says he: "Disbelief crept over me at a very slow rate, but was at last complete." Thus it was that evolution became the satanic device which robbed Darwin of the most precious faith with which he began his Christian ministry and it is indeed the device which is destroying modern man's faith in the doctrines of traditional Christianity. It is asserted: "Evolution . . . does not concede that man ever fell, but avers that he has gradually risen from the state of the beast and is getting better all the time. Any evil that is in him is not sin inherited from his father, Adam, but simply beastly instincts that are a holdover from his simian ancestors."¹⁶

The breakdown of Christian morality and ethics in America today (and elsewhere) is directly related to substituting "organic evolution" for "divine creation." When man once accepts the idea that he is nothing more than an "evolutionary beast" and that he is the product of the "tusk and claw and fin" of the primeval slime pits, it does not take long for him to sink into moral and spiritual bankruptcy.¹⁷

The theory of evolution is the base upon which man can build his own "naturalistic theology." When the theory of evolution is substituted for the fact of creation as revealed in the Genesis record, the Bible is pushed into a compromising position. It is no longer the authoritative Word of God, but rather a mythological compendium out of which some values can be extracted. Thus evolution provides an entrance for a theory of man's origin which makes the "rationalization of man" rather than "divine revelation" the measurement of truth. Evolution

¹⁶Shapley, *Science Ponders Religion*, p. 13ff.

¹⁷Symptoms of this moral and spiritual bankruptcy are reflected in the drunken sex orgies by our youth on the beaches during the Easter vacation period. The sex-mad religious jazz-dramas (For Heaven's Sake, etc.) prepared for and by certain "religious" leaders for our youth is a matter of grave concern. (For information on obtaining this material write National Council of Churches, 475 Riverside Drive, New York 17, N. Y.).

becomes a vehicle in which the historical Adam is spirited out of the well-kept Garden of Eden into the jungle womb in which it is claimed, "original man was born." With only a mythical Adam the doctrine of original sin and the subsequent doctrine of the blood atonement lose their relevance. Thus, according to this line of thinking the doctrine of the virgin birth along with the other miracles become theological absurdities.

We are told in the Bible that Christ was co-existent with God the Father from the beginning, but "Evolution's theory of Christ's advent presents Him as 'the culmination of the process in the realm of personality, the crown of divine effort working at the heart of human thought all the ages that preceded his coming.' Hence, according to this theory, He pre-existed only in the successive stages from lower to higher until the process culminated in divinity." From this it would appear that the Advent of Jesus Christ should have ushered in a perfected sinless human race.

Modern man has become victim to the myth that "the Bible is in irreconcilable conflict with science" and that "the Bible is assumed to have been worsted in the conflict between Genesis One and evolution." This is unfortunate. It is the feeling of many biblical scholars that "this conflict is due to misconception of the Bible's teaching and its relation to scientific theory . . . much of the scientific-religious conflict can be avoided if extremes of scientific dogmatism on the naturalistic nature and animal origin of man are avoided."¹⁸

In Genesis it is stated that God created things "after their kind." It seems reasonable to assume that "kind" as used in Genesis has to do with types which can interbreed. We agree that there has been change but there is a lack of evidence to support the evolutionist's claims that all living forms found today come from one common ancestor. We believe that God created life after "their kind," as the Bible states so plainly. Above all, we insist that man was created separately and in the "image of God" in a specific creative act and not through a process of evolution from a single-celled animal.

James D. Bales gives an interesting statement at this point: "It will be observed that the Bible does not say how God formed man's body from the dust of the earth, nor how

¹⁸R. Laird Harris, "The Bible and Cosmology" *Bulletin, Evangelical Theological Society*, March, 1962, p. 11.

long it took. However, it does not seem that the silence of the Scriptures in this place gives us any grounds, when we consider some other passages, for assuming that it was by an evolutionary process via the animal route.

"*First*, although animal flesh was already in existence — and it, too, was formed of the ground (Genesis 2:19) — yet the passage of Genesis 2:7 does not say that man was formed from animal flesh but of the dust of the ground. Both animal life and dust existed when God created man. God made man from the dust and not from living creatures.

"*Second*, Genesis 1:24, 25 shows that God created animals and enabled them to bring forth *after their kind*. 'And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind; and it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the earth after its kind: and God saw that it was good' (Genesis 1:24, 25). The law of reproduction in this passage reveals that the animals, who were created before man was created, were to reproduce *after their kind*. However, if man came by evolution via the animal route, some animals would have had to produce not their own kind, but mankind."¹⁹

Scientists have now isolated a chemical compound called DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) which is claimed to be the basis of life itself and that the human body contains billions of these DNA units or specks. Of these specks Rutherford Platt says, "These DNA specks have a similar chemical composition, are about the same size, and look very much like those in your dog, or a housefly, a bread mold or blade of grass, yet somehow the specks are coded to make every living thing different from every other living thing. They make dogs different from fish or birds" It seems to this writer that this is the scientific discovery which verifies and confirms the biblical phrase, "after his kind." This seems to be what Paul had in mind when he said, "But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes and another of birds" (I Corinthians 15:38).

¹⁹James D. Bales, "The Relevance of Scriptural Interpretation to Scientific Thought," Bulletin, *Evangelical Theological Society*, Dec., 1961, p. 127.

"Third, the evolutionists — so far as I know — believe that man and woman came by the same route. Even if man had evolved from animals it could not be assumed that woman so evolved, for the Bible expressly says that she was made from man. No evolutionists whom I know maintain that man evolved and that later from man woman evolved.

"Furthermore, if such were the case, it would have to be a very speedy evolutionary process in order for woman to evolve, and offspring to be possible, before man died of old age.

"Fourth, in Genesis 1:30, animals, birds, and creeping things are referred to as those 'wherein there is life' or a living soul. These were living in contrast with the non-living. In Genesis 2:7, 'man became a living soul.' Although man was made in God's image (Genesis 1:26), and is more than an animal, yet he does also have the life of the body. Man is also a living creature. It is important to notice that Genesis 2:7 speaks of the inanimate becoming the animate (formed of the dust, the breath of life breathed into his nostrils 'and man became a living soul'). In other words, man was not alive as a beast and then became alive as a man. He was not alive in brute form, and then developed into a human form. Instead he became alive."²⁰

It is interesting to note the ridiculous position into which the "theistic evolutionist" places himself when he insists that "theistic evolution" can be reconciled with science. Many leading scientists and true evolutionists hold the view that there is no place for deity in the theory of evolution. At the recent Darwinian Convocation, the annual meeting of the American Association for Advancement of Science at the University of Chicago, one of the spokesmen avers: "Evolution is a fully natural process, inherent in the physical properties of the universe, by which life arose in the first place and by which all living things, past or present, have since developed, divergently and progressively." Another spokesman asserts: "In the evolutionary pattern of thought there is no longer need or room for the supernatural. The earth was not created; it evolved. So did all the animals, and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul, as well as brain and body. So did religion."²¹ The reporter of the above makes this statement:

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 127.

²¹John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1961, p. 441ff.

"Probably the most significant thing about these remarks of Simpson and Huxley, and many others that were to the same effect at this significant Darwinian 'worship service,' was that evidently none of the more than 2,000 leading scientists that were present, from all over the world, raised any public objections to these sentiments." ²²

In this country the theory of evolution has been inbred with theism but this effort has resulted in confusion and misunderstanding. It is pointed out that "in other countries, the real implications of evolution have been more readily recognized and acknowledged, and this is especially true in (atheistic) Communist countries, where it is the backbone of the whole scientific structure of Communistic philosophy." ²³

An examination of our public school text books and some of our church school literature reveals the influence that the evolutionary philosophy has had upon our secular and religious curriculum. It is the basic foundation for our entire educational philosophy upon which our present system of "progressive education" rests. As a result God is being pushed completely out of our educational approach. The Supreme Court has declared it unconstitutional to require the reading of our Bible in public schools, thus every type of atheism and skepticism can be taught while the Bible cannot be used to assert the claims of God.

The resentment which "organic Evolutionists" have to "theistic evolution" is reflected in a recent book by the noted evolutionary biologist, Oscar Riddle in which he castigates organized religion for "harnessing evolution to theism." ²⁴

Those who associate God with, and make Him the author of "man from animal evolution" should inform themselves of the fact that science textbooks and scientific articles in the encyclopedias present evolution on purely naturalistic grounds. The writer has not discovered a single public school textbook on science in which the theory of evolution is not presented independently and apart from a divine causative. The theory of natural selection evolution was being seriously considered long before liberal theologians began to recognize it as a vehicle in which they could give "scientific" credence to their radical

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴Oscar Riddle, *The Unleashing of Evolutionary Thought*, New York; Vantage Press, 1955.

theories, based in the main, upon the assumption that "God had little or nothing to do with the Bible" and that "the Bible is one book among others, with its inspiration differing only in degree from the inspiration that you might get from Tennyson, Emerson or any other writer."

To say the least, the theory of evolution is inherently atheistic and it seems strange that supposedly Christian scholars should be prone to embrace this theory with such enthusiasm. Is it possible that man can undergo a "mental brain washing" which results in spiritual blindness? Furthermore, it seems somewhat out of congress to assert that man's origin from the "animal world" is not indisputable and proved beyond a doubt. Some evolutionists arrogantly assert that those who do not agree with the theory of evolution are ignorant and unlearned. Perhaps it would be in keeping with scientific integrity to ponder the statement of the noted scientist and philosopher, James A. Jauncey, with regard to the world of science: "All we can say at the moment is that evolution is generally accepted, possibly because of the lack of any scientific alternative, but with serious misgivings on the adequacy of some aspects of it. As for the kind of rigorous proof that science generally demands, it still isn't there. Indeed, some say that because of the philosophic aspects of the theory, that proof will never be possible . . . Dr. Lin Yutang in his book, *From Pagan to Christian*, after stating that he himself is a Darwinist, writes: ' . . . the process involved in the law of evolution, observed by a serious student and not superficially accepted, lead to and always end in metaphysics, that is in assumptions beyond the laws of physics' . . . Dr. Mortimer J. Adler of the University of Chicago known for his Great Books work, rejects evolution entirely on its philosophic presuppositions. He calls it a 'myth' and says he does so advisedly in order to refer to the elaborate history which vastly exceeds the evidence. He says it is the work of 'philosophers'" (Cited from Adler's book: *What Man Has Made of Man*).

Dr. Jauncey also observes: "Curiously enough, it does not seem that having a theory to explain the relation between living things is as essential from a practical point of view as was once thought. As a matter of fact, there are colleges and schools now which are perfectly able to teach biology without any omissions or problems at all and without even mentioning

the theory of evolution And yet if you were to take a good student from one of these schools and compare his knowledge with one of those of equal ability from a school where evolution is taught, you would find that there would be no significance in their biological information at all." Jauncey also points out: "A good illustration of this is the brilliance of Seventh Day Adventist doctors. Although medicine is directly dependent on biology, and evolution is completely absent from their thinking on biology, yet nevertheless they are some of the finest doctors in the land."²⁵

Jauncey suggests that we take a "look at the main evidence for the theory of evolution and see those strange bed-fellows, science and philosophy, at work together. The most telling point for the theory is the sameness that basically exists in all living things. By careful arrangements, you can construct a tree of descent starting from one single cell in increasing complexity to man himself. Each creature in this succession has features in common with those below it but also individual peculiarities as well. So far, this is indisputable science. Now philosophy comes in. It says that each unit developed into the next by a series of infinitesimal graduations. It is something like a moving picture. It is composed of a series of individual still pictures but the eye interprets them as one moving image. Notice, though, how the interpretation of science goes beyond the facts themselves."²⁶

In the interest of scholarly integrity, great care should be given in considering the various evolution-related theories. Some anthropological theories are based upon fraud and forgery, a fact brought home to us in 1953 "when it was announced that the famous bones of the so-called Piltdown Man were a hoax." Jauncey says: "The disturbing feature here is that this could go undiscovered by paleontologists for forty years. This is no fault of these scientists, but it does show how uncertain and subjective this kind of study is. Actually, all we have to go on in any particular case are a few bones and perhaps a few artifacts. Then it is also difficult to tell at times whether the characters are really new forms rather than diseased normal forms. Obviously, the amount of guesswork involved in interpret-

²⁵James H. Jauncey, *Science Returns to God*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1961, p. 57 f.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 59.

ing what the creatures were like is enormous. For this reason, the reconstructions by artists that you see in popular magazines and even in museums should be disregarded." All are familiar with the artistic profile of the Piltdown Man in *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* prior to the 1953 edition. The theory of evolution is drawn from sources — fossil evidence, vestigial remains, embryological or recapitulation theories, mutations, mimicry, sexual selection, etc., but one and all still leave us with "missing links" or gaps in the evolutionary continuum.

Addenda

Real scientific facts have never been brought together sufficient to prove a single one of the many branches of organic evolution. At best, the theory belongs to the realm of subjective speculation and not to the field of objective fact. It is the judgment of this writer that theistic evolutionists have been far too outspoken and dogmatic in their claims and that the idea of organic evolution has been a detriment to the Christian faith and is absolutely contrary to the Biblical record.

Organic evolution is the basis of all thought in Russia and it is apparent that God-less atheism has thrived and prospered in a seed-bed of evolution. It is felt that the skepticism and atheism now being manifested in the United States is an outgrowth in part of the wide-spread promulgation of "organic evolution" in our public schools and institutions of higher learning, including church-related colleges and universities. We note with alarm that the National Council of Churches has been putting on special television programs in an effort to show that organic evolution is compatible with the Genesis record.

It is significant that the idea of organic evolution originated in the heathen mind and not in the Christian intellect. Aristotle conceived the idea of organic evolution as "an internal spontaneity" and La Conte as "resident forces" long before Darwin, Wallace, Lamarch and Spencer promulgated their ideas. It is evident that organic evolution has no place for a living, personal God. "A God who is transcendent to nature, as well as imminent in nature, is therefore, of necessity, excluded by thorough-going Evolutionists."²⁷

²⁷John R. Stratton, "Evolution — the Theory Disproved" (*ISBE*, Vol. II, 1048B).

It is quite clear that the doctrine of organic evolution is antagonistic to that of Creation and as Huxley says, "Evolution, if consistently accepted, makes it impossible to believe the Bible."

Organic evolution is un-Christian and diametrically opposed to the Christian system of thought. Seven considerations substantiate this conclusion:

(1) The theory of organic evolution excludes a transcendent God, thus leading to pantheism instead of theism.

(2) The theory of organic evolution nullifies the idea of creation as clearly stated in the Biblical record.

(3) The theory of organic evolution degrades man in that it denies the direct Divine origin of man. Instead of having been created in God's image as a man, the "Theistic Evolutionist" would have us believe that man evolved out of a beast of the jungle.

(4) The theory of organic evolution invalidates Bible authority. Darwin, in his "Life and Letters," says, "For myself, I do not believe that there ever has been any revelation." Thus the Bible is reduced to a man conceived and produced book without action on the part of God.

(5) The theory of organic evolution denies the truth of Christ as to His Incarnation and Virgin Birth and puts Him in the same category with other men — only a little higher up in the evolutionary scale. We have reason to wonder if Christ was a culminating figure in the ever-upreaching scheme of evolution, why the human race did not continue from there as 100% Christ-like characters . . . It is interesting to note that apart from the virgin-born Son of God, the human race is basically the same now as it was before the birth of Christ. Evolution cannot accommodate the bodily resurrection of Christ nor His Second Coming. It would seem that the plainly stated Biblical record is much more compatible with the facts than the theory of evolution.

(6) The theory of organic evolution invalidates the Christian interpretation of sin and defines evil as "the working out of the fundamental forces of life itself." Thus the logic of organic evolution destroys not only the doctrine of Original Sin but also the Holiness of God, for it makes God the author of sin.

(7) The theory of organic evolution is contrary to Christian ethics. Progress is the "mid-wife" of evolution and gives birth to the idea of "the survival of the fittest," through selfish struggle

opposition to the Christian teaching of love, service and growth through self-sacrifice.

There is no place for Jesus Christ in the evolutionary program because Jesus Christ, in the view of evolution, is a "freak of nature." This is supported by the fact that the so called "up-reach" of evolution ended with Jesus Christ. Humanity still has not evolved to the state of perfection such as was demonstrated by our Saviour. Man is still basically sinful and needs the divine intervention expressed in the New Birth. Evolution would deny the reality of miracle including the new birth and the virgin birth.

We would acknowledge that a theistic evolutionist could be saved but we would insist that by promoting this theory many less informed people would suffer a destruction of their redemptive faith potential. Evolution is basically and essentially atheistic.

The theory that man descended from beasts of the jungle is so incompatible with the biblical record of man's origin that only the most abstract and detached rationalization could fit into a supposed biblical pattern. The idea that Adam and Eve were created initially by God as two human beings is so obvious that further discussion would serve no useful end. However, in a day when study of the Bible is neglected and the evidence of Bible ignorance is so apparent, it is possible for the deceptive and subtle theories of liberalism to find lodgement in the minds of some people. In order to refresh our memory it is well to cite the instances in our Bible where Adam is definitely presented as a historical person and not "a symbolical term for all mankind."

1. *The Historicity of Adam*

The fact that Adam and Eve were actual, historical human beings is clearly affirmed by many witnesses in both the Old and New Testaments including the clear-cut affirmation by Jesus Christ. In the following paragraphs some Scripture references are given to substantiate this claim and to show how ridiculous the "symbolic" theory really is:

1. *Genesis 1:27* Here it is categorically stated that "God created man in his own image" and that He created them "male and female." Jesus affirms this: "Have ye not read, that he which made them *at the beginning* made them male and female" (Matthew 19:4).

2. *Genesis 2:19* "God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air and brought them to Adam to name."
3. *Genesis 2:21, 22* "The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh thereof; and of the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man."
4. *Genesis 3:1ff* Here it is stated that Adam and Eve committed the sin of disobedience. (They are true human beings.)
5. *Genesis 4:1* "Adam knew his wife and she conceived, and bare Cain." Later Abel and other children were born.
6. *Genesis 5:1-3* "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years"
7. *Genesis 5:5* Here we are told that Adam lived 930 years.
8. *Deuteronomy 32:8* In this reference Moses clearly affirms the historicity of Adam. The nations of the earth are referred to as the "sons of Adam."
9. *Joshua 3:16* In this passage a city is named after Adam.
10. *I Chronicles 1:1* Here the name Adam is listed as the first in a chronology of the human race.
11. *Job 31:33* Job clearly acknowledges Adam as a real person and compares his own transgression to that of Adam.
12. *Luke 3:38* Luke acknowledges Adam as a real person and lists him as the first person in his chronology of the human race.
13. *Romans 5:12* Paul tells us that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned."
14. *Romans 5:14, 18* Paul clearly acknowledges Adam to be a historical person: "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come . . . therefore as by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."

15. *I Corinthians 15:22* "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."
16. *I Corinthians 15:45* "And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit."
17. *I Timothy 2:13* "For Adam was first formed, then Eve."
18. *Jude 14* Jude affirms that Adam was a real person: "And Enoch also the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these things"
19. *I Corinthians 15:39* Paul clearly tells the Corinthians that the flesh of animals is different from that of man:
 "All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes and another of birds."
 If this is true, how can there be a biological relationship between the "claw, the tusk and fin of the jungle" and man whom God made in His image?

It is obvious that both the theory of evolution (man from animal) and the creation of the Bible cannot be true. Without Adam such doctrines as atonement of Christ's blood, sanctification, and the many other redemptive doctrines lose their relevance.

At this point we quote two Articles of Religion as listed in *The Methodist Discipline* to show that the church has assumed Adam's historicity. These statements are similar to the creedal statements in the other denominations.

"Par. 67. Original Sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.

"Par. 68. The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God"

The conclusions of a noted scientist with an abiding faith in the Bible should give us reason for sober thought: "This idea of Evolution (personified) has finally come to consciousness in man and that Man is the paramount agent now in its further development has had tremendous influence throughout the world and amounts to nothing less than a deification of Man!

This enthronement of Man and forced abdication of God are the ultimate goal of all non-Christian or anti-Christian systems — a great super-system of humanistic evolutionary pantheism the morality of evolution, which assumes that progress and achievement and 'good' come about through such action as benefits the individual himself or the group of which he is a part, to the detriment of others, is most obviously anti-Christian. The very essence of Christianity is unselfish service on behalf of others, motivated by the great sacrifice of Christ Himself, dying in atonement for the sins of the whole world! It is highly unlikely, if not inconceivable, that an all-powerful, all-wise, all-holy God would institute two such fundamentally contradictory systems in the world. The two systems certainly exist, . . . but God can be the Author of only one of them. The other must have its source in the pride and selfishness of man and ultimately in the pride and deception of the great adversary, Satan himself.”²⁸

Those who accept the Bible as the authoritative, infallible Word of God would join in the affirmation by Luke Woodward:

“Evolution, if I accepted it, would rob me of the Lord Jesus Christ because it would make Him the result of an evolutionary process rather than the Creator of all things and the One who existed before all things. It would rob Him of His deity, make Him a liar, and strip Him of His power to forgive sin.”²⁹

²⁸Whitcomb and Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, p. 447.

²⁹Cora Reno, *Evolution: Fact and Theory*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1953, p. 9.

Appendix

Appendix

A. OTHER MIRACLE BIRTH STORIES

Efforts have been made at various times to show from history and mythology that the idea of the virgin birth is relevant to other religious leaders. A careful study of these analogies and examples, however, reveals that the quality of the narratives is low, base and perverted. The rudest type of sensuality is reflected in the relationship between the gods and human beings. Animalism, carnality, effeminacy, licentiousness, debauchery and sexual orgies of the most perverted kind characterize these so-called virgin and miracle birth stories. This, together with the fantastic nature of the narratives, places them in a category entirely different from the pure and simple story of Christ's birth in all of its simplicity and dignity. Many instances could be cited. Only a representative sampling can be given here because of space limitation.

"In a work composed many centuries after Buddha's death, treating of the beginnings of his life up to the preaching in Benares, Lalita-Vistara, we read also of the miraculous circumstances of the birth of Buddha. He appears as the son of a married queen—not of a virgin—who conceived him not through intercourse with her husband but through the entering 'of a small white elephant into her side' The affinity of this notion and that of the New Testament confines itself to the separation of the human father in the origin of Christ and that of Buddha."¹

Dr. Ferm, in his article on Buddha, states the problem well when he says, "It is difficult to distinguish facts from fiction Imaginative tales and outright myths crept into the most primitive account of him. Even the recognized facts of this account are not entirely reliable, for the Pali Canon in which this account is contained was 200 years later than the events it described Some scholars, like Przuluski, even reject the account as primitive."²

¹Grutzmacher, *The Virgin Birth*, p. 56.

²Vergilius Ferm, "Gatoma Buddha," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, New York: The Philosophical Library, 1945.

It is obvious that no comparison can be drawn between Buddha and Jesus Christ. Allusion to the elephant is clearly suggestive of heathen mythology and cannot be compared to the standards and quality of the biblical record. It is not easy to explain how a married queen became a betrothed virgin and a small white elephant, the Spirit of God. "According to Gunkel Saoshyant, corresponding in Parseeism to the future Christ who is to appear at the end of the world, is 'born of a virgin in a supernatural manner.' In tracing the sources we find, indeed, something entirely different, an offensive narrative. From the cornucopia of the Babylonian religion, which in other directions has of late distributed so many gifts, our department has been presented with only one. King Sargon narrates of himself: 'Sargon the mighty king of Agade, am I. My mother was a Vestal (?), my father of low descent . . . My Vestal-mother (?) conceived me, in secret she begat me.'"³ In this passage the word *enitu* is translated "Vestal" to mean immaculate temple virgin.

Scholars acquainted with the nature religions of Sumeria, Babylon, Assyria and Ras Shamra know that all young girls were required to serve as temple prostitutes before their marriage. The obvious translation indicates that Sargon's mother was once a "temple prostitute" and not a "temple virgin."

Reference is often made to Romulus and Remus as being descendants from a vestal who is said to have had unlawful intercourse with the war god Mars. Drawing a parallel between Romulus and Remus and the narrative of Matthew and Luke is indeed ridiculous.

In the Graeco-Roman culture many instances are found in which prominent men of history are presented as having had a peculiar origin. "Usener mentions a whole series of sons of gods; Pythagoras was considered a son of Apollo; Appollonius of Tyana, a son of Zeus; in like manner it is said that Plato's mother had not her son by her husband, but by Apollo. The like opinion was entertained of Alexander, whose mother is said to have been visited by a god in the shape of a serpent; it is especially significant that the emperor Augustus was also made the son of Apollo Usener connects also two others according to which certain men are said to have been born of a virgin. One refers to Simon the Magician, in the Clementine

³Grutzmacher, *The Virgin Birth*, p. 58.

Recognitions, ii, c. 14; the other to a certain Terebinthos, mentioned in the Acta Archelai et Manctis, c. 52.”⁴

Almost all of the writers showing special significance to these “so-called” virgin birth stories fail to take recognition of the fact that reference to the virgin birth belongs to cycles which were influenced by Christianity and to post-Christian writings. The basic idea of a virgin-born Messiah goes back in Hebrew history to the early Genesis account (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14).

The world of sin has always endeavored to make counterfeits. It has borrowed all of the outstanding values belonging to the Jehovah-Christian religion and has tried to make them its own. If the truth were known, most of the values of the world’s religions have been borrowed from the Jehovah-Christian stream. Some rationalists force heathen writings and try to prove that Christianity borrowed extensively from mythology and folklore, when as a matter of fact the opposite is true.

Dr. Grutzmacher puts it well when he points out that “the Clementine Recognitions, like the Acta Archelai, were under the influence of the primitive Christian gospel literature and also of the prologues of Matthew and Luke. They are therefore not their roots but their excrescences.”⁵

To discover at all the relationship between the history of the birth of Augustus and that of Jesus Christ required, on the whole, a rich religious-historical erudition; which the simple, unperverted reader hardly has at his command . . . In heathenism he sees a drawing down of the deity into the rudest sensuality, its transformation into animals — particularly into a serpent, or as in Buddhism, an elephant. The whole supernaturalness consists simply in this, that a so-called god performs a physical act in place of a man.

Many believers in Christ join Dr. Pieters in saying: “How any one possessed of a little common sense can offer these tales as parallel to the story of the birth of Jesus, is difficult to understand. They are not virgin birth stories at all, for the supernatural element invariably consists in the alleged incarnation of the god, after which there is nothing but a natural process. Moreover, such stories do not concern historical persons, and there is no pretense that the information proceeds from contemporary documents, written by well-known and responsible men. After a

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 60.

laborious and occasionally wearisome study of the evidence offered and the analogies urged, we are convinced that heathenism knows nothing of virgin births."⁶

On the other hand the scriptural account of the virgin born Christ is simply told and renders wholly impossible the thought of the Holy Spirit as the sensual progenitor of the child Jesus. Other references are cited by a long list of writers. A virgin birth parallel is credited to Horus, Isis, Apis, Ra, Attis, Dionipos, and others. Impressive as these references are, a careful check will reveal a vast difference between the sensuous circumstances surrounding these pagan deities and the simple virgin birth narrative in Matthew and Luke. Most of the liberal writers in this area get rid of the gospel narrative dealing with the virgin birth by some such statement as: "Many Old and New Testament phrases should be read as Oriental metaphors, and not as occidental expressions of scientific fact."⁷

This technique provides an escape mechanism for any and all scriptural statements that do not fit into the philosophy of liberalism. Those falling into this pattern have "a marked tendency to rationalism (which) causes them to uniformly ignore, as much as possible, the miraculous elements of the Scriptures. Whenever these particular features cannot be evaded, it is the policy of this group either to cunningly explain away the historicity of supernatural assertions or to invalidate the texts which declare them. It is possible with this method of 'rigor and vigor' to subvert all Scriptures to any and all prejudices for personal faith or conduct."⁸

For the sake of our discussion, let us assume that some kind of miracle attended the birth of other great men and religious leaders. There is still one way in which the coming of Jesus Christ was unique and peculiar. Before these other leaders were born no one expected them. Names like those of Moses, Plato, Confucius, Buddha, Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, Kepler, Newton, and Louis Pasteur adorn the pages of history, and men treasure the memory of what they did: but of which of them all can it be said that either the world at large or any part of

⁶Pieters, *The Facts and Mysteries of the Christian Faith*, p. 194.

⁷Jocelyn Rhys, *Shaken Creeds: The Virgin Birth Doctrine*. London: Watts and Co., 1922.

⁸Orville E. Crain, *The Credibility of the Virgin Birth*. New York: The Abingdon Press, 1925.

it was longing for and expecting his birth beforehand? A man's personal history begins with his birth and ends with his death — with that one exception of Jesus Christ. As the story of the gospels does not close when He was laid in the tomb, so it does not open when He was laid in a manger . . . Men then were waiting, and had already waited long, for His coming . . . This Messianic expectation preceding the birth of Jesus Christ is one of the most unique, the most significant, and the most certain of all historical phenomena."⁹ A definite prediction of His coming, as quoted to Herod the Great, is found in Matthew 2:3-6 and verified in Micah 5:2. No other system of religion can make this claim. The coming of Christ satisfied the anxious expectation of countless generations.

B. THE VALIDITY OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Doubt of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ has come into frequent focus recently, with such church leaders as Martin Rist, Bishop James A. Pike, and Frederick C. Grant denying its validity. It is the feeling of many Christians, however, that this view is in direct contradiction with what the historic church has understood the Scriptures to teach.

The general intent of these negative views may be summed up in a statement found in a personal letter from Harry Emerson Fosdick to H. E. Fisher, editor of *The Christian Beacon*: "Of course, I do not believe in the virgin birth . . . and I do not know of any intelligent Christian who does."

Iliff professor Martin Rist (*The Denver Post*, Feb. 4, 1961) leaves the impression that "scientific methods" of biblical interpretation have superseded revelation and personal experience, and that belief in the virgin birth is now untenable. Bishop James A. Pike (*Time*, Feb. 24, 1961, *Newsweek*, Feb. 27, 1961) expresses the view that his (Episcopal) Church's Articles of Religion "represent the allergic reaction of our church," and that "the virgin birth is a myth."

Frederick C. Grant, noted New Testament scholar, attempts to do away with the virgin birth by clever philosophical interpretations. Mary's recorded statement: "seeing I know not a man" and "since I have no husband" is brushed away by the simple statement that it "must have been added later." (*Translating the Bible*, Seabury Press). What's more, he claims that

⁹Pieters, *The Facts and Mysteries of the Christian Faith*, p. 42.

"the word for 'virgin' is not in the Hebrew text" (*Basic Christian Beliefs*, Board of Missions, The Methodist Church), which statement can be challenged. If no reference to the virgin birth is made in the *Isaiah* text it certainly puts the inspiration of Matthew in doubt. (Matthew 1:22-23).

The qualifying statement in Luke 3:23, "as was supposed" gets the death blow from Grant through a clever literary device called a "gloss" which according to Webster is "a deceptive explanation."

Theologian Nels F. S. Ferre endeavors to justify the deity of Jesus within the framework that, "The birth stories are, to be sure, most improbable . . . for this reason, the simplest thing to believe may be that Joseph was the natural father of Jesus" (*The Christian Understanding of God*, Harper & Bros.). And Ferre adds, "We have no way of knowing, even, that Jesus was sinless, but such a claim is irrelevant to the reality of the Incarnation." Obviously, Ferre's estimation of the integrity of Scripture is somewhat different from that held by traditional Christianity.

The prominence given expressions of this kind makes it necessary for Christians who have implicit faith in the Scriptures and the creedal affirmations to be heard. It is hoped that this statement will serve as a bridge of communication between scholars holding different viewpoints, and that it will result in a better understanding of why belief in the doctrine of the virgin birth is essential to the spiritual well-being of those who accept *the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints* (Jude 3).

It is a historical fact that the Church has confessed belief in the doctrine of the virgin birth from early times. This is attested by the Apostles' Creed. Today, we confess our belief in this doctrine, not because of creedal authority, but because of our confidence in the Apostolic witness and the Scripture truth it embodies. Furthermore, the doctrine of the virgin birth is more consistent with the miraculous life, work, and teaching of Jesus Christ than any other explanation of the Incarnation.

Scholars are agreed that no doctrinal changes are necessary because of newly discovered manuscripts. The committee of translators for the Revised Standard Version states that "no doctrine of the Christian faith has been affected by the revision, for the simple reason that, out of thousands of variant readings in the manuscripts, none has turned up thus far that requires a revision

of Christian doctrine" (*The Greek Text of the New Testament*, introducing the New Testament, R.S.V.). It can be concluded from this that the traditional doctrine of the virgin birth certainly has not been seriously affected.

It can also be pointed out that the testimony of the Church Fathers, who lived so near the Apostolic Period, had not changed with regard to the virgin birth. The witness of these authorities is clear and certain. Irenaeus, in about A.D. 190, affirms the place the doctrine of the virgin birth had in the Church of his day. In the Creed of Tertullian, a little later than Irenaeus, the virgin birth holds the same secure position. Justin Martyr and Ignatius are among the Church Fathers affirming this important doctrine. Should we ignore the testimony of belief during a time which was in such close proximity to the Apostolic Period and accept instead the speculation of the so-called "scientific investigative techniques"?

Kenneth Scott Latourette points out in *A History of Christianity* (Harper & Bros.), that the traditional doctrines about Christ were challenged by Celsus, Porphyry, Marcion, Basilides of Alexandria, and Valentinus, but it should be noted that none of these critics were ever in the main body of the Church. Moreover, the opponents of the traditional doctrine of Christ have neither an historical tradition of their own to support their claim, nor a supporting frame of reference from their writings for their own conclusions.

Where, then, is the basis for doubting the validity of the virgin birth? Has some scientific discovery been made that makes the virgin birth less possible than before? Edwin Lewis, the former professor of systematic theology at Drew University, sums it up in these words: "The virgin birth of Jesus Christ and his Resurrection . . . neither of these two elements of the Christian faith has anything whatever to do with science. They are not presented for scientific verification . . . science as such, is equally impotent to prove or disprove Christian truth." (*A Philosophy of the Christian Revelation*, out of print.)

A great scientist of our generation stated that "it is unscientific to say that a so-called miracle did not happen, for we may some day discover that there are laws not now known to us, which account for what we cannot now understand. . . . The process of living requires decisions that go far beyond anything that science can prove." (*Possibilities Unlimited: A Scientist's*

Approach to Christianity, Daniel L. Morris, Harper & Bros.).

Bishop Arthur J. Moore in his *The Mighty Saviour* (Abingdon), gives this heartening affirmation: "I am convinced first of all, that Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary. I believe he was supernaturally born. . . . Historic and supernatural Christianity stands or falls with Christ. . . . Christianity is built and based from first to finish upon the supernatural Christ."

Such critics as A. Eustace Haydon, in *An Encyclopedia of Religion* (Philosophical Library, out of print), compare the biblical account of the virgin birth of our Lord to the birth stories in other religions. After a careful study in this area, it is difficult to see what similarities are to be found in these sources. The pure and wholesome story of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ must not be confused with the base, perverted pagan stories in which the rudest type of sensuality is reflected between gods and human beings.

The troubling silence of Mark and John on the subject is frequently referred to, but it can be pointed out that these books are saturated with the supernaturalism of which the virgin birth is an integral part. Luke gives a straightforward statement of the virgin birth, hence is included in *those things which are most surely believed among us*. . . . (Luke 1:1.)

Paul may not allude directly to the virgin birth, but since Luke and Paul were close friends and traveling companions, it is not likely that Paul was ignorant of the virgin birth. It is evident that he accepted the miraculous elements implicit in this important doctrine.

The doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ has been one of the great foundation doctrines from the beginning. It is intimately associated in the mind of the Church with the deity of Jesus Christ.

Edward W. Bauman presents a view, academically, which best represents the biblical facts: "Jesus must be qualitatively different from other men if he is truly the Son of God. He must be free from the weakness and limitations of humanity and he must be free from the sinfulness inherent in natural conception and human birth. Thus he was born miraculously of a virgin in order to establish uniqueness as the Son of God." (*The Life and Teachings of Jesus*, Westminster Press).

The words of the late Bishop Horace M. DuBose should cause us to search our religious conscience: "If . . . the Church in

America betrays the truth of the Scriptures, as voiced in the Apostles' Creed, both the Church and the nation are doomed to sink in the scale of moral and spiritual righteousness. . . . If those pseudo-scientific theologians who are trying to rewrite the Apostles' Creed should be widely abetted, then another page of darkness must come upon the world's faith. The exposition of the Creed at this time takes on the character of a prophetic 'burden.'" (*The Apostles' Creed*, Methodist Book Concern, out of print).

The words of Harold Paul Sloan, a noted Methodist scholar, are also worthy of careful consideration: "The trouble with much of the profound thinking of the 20th century is that it is not profound. The trouble with much of the learning in our universities is that it is not learned. We are stumbling over our own shallowness and thinking it is learning. If only we were more profound and more learned, we would stand in wonder, and worship with the shepherds and worship the Babe of Bethlehem." (*The Apostles' Creed*, Methodist Book Concern, out of print). Although these statements were made three decades ago, their content indicates their relevance to this topic.

We need to emphasize the facts stated in the prologue of the gospel of John, that Jesus, the divine Logos, was not only God from all eternity, but that He was God. Thus, Jesus Christ was God, the pre-existent One, prior to His entrance into the human race at Bethlehem, and since natural birth always produces a new person, it follows that something more than natural birth must be involved here. Matthew himself indicates this by stating that Mary *was found with child of the Holy Ghost* (Matthew 1:18). This is certainly the virgin birth.

I am grateful I belong to a denomination whose Articles of Religion stand so clearly for the validity of the virgin birth: "The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for the actual sins of man" (*The Methodist Discipline*, Para. 62).

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C. A PHYSICIAN LOOKS AT THE VIRGIN BIRTH

In our Christian faith and heritage there are certain doctrines which are held to be essential, such as the deity of our Lord, His virgin birth, His atoning work on the Cross, His bodily resurrection, and His return in glory.

Because of their importance, Christians should have an intelligent understanding of these doctrines and as occasion arises be ready to "give an answer to every man that asketh," an answer which will be accurate and helpful.

In recent years it has become increasingly popular to discount the importance of the doctrine of the virgin birth, the usual excuse being that it is not "essential." In recent weeks the newspapers carried stories of two Presbyterian ministers — one in the North, the other in the South — who told their presbyteries they could not accept the virgin birth.

In one sense of the word it is true that faith in the virgin birth of our Lord is not essential to salvation. But saving faith in Jesus Christ has to do with both His *Person* and His *Work* and because the implications of the virgin birth have an inextricable relationship to His *Person* it becomes a doctrine of the greatest significance for the *Person and Work* of our Lord can never be separated the one from the other.

This being true we are wise if we re-study some of the reasons why evangelical Christians believe in the virgin birth for it is a matter of the greatest importance.

There are those who argue against the virgin birth because of the silence of Mark, John and Paul. Such seems more a subterfuge than an argument. Mark began his gospel with the entrance of Christ into His public ministry. John traces the divine descent of Jesus and tells us, "The Word became flesh"; but how this miracle was accomplished he does not say, for he knew others had given these details and he took them for granted. As for Paul, he certainly was not ignorant of this. He had had Luke as his close companion. He does not enter into this personal matter but rather into the facts of our Lord's public ministry, death and resurrection. His stress on the pre-existent Christ as the eternal Son of God would certainly imply a knowledge that when He "emptied" Himself and was "born of a woman, made under the law," but "knew no sin" this transition was a supernatural one and happened in a supernatural way. One wonders why some who argue the silence of Paul on this subject seem so

unwilling at the same time to accept Paul's clear teaching with reference to the Lord's return. Arguments to be effective must be both logical and honest.

(1) *We believe in the virgin birth because the Bible states plainly and unequivocally that Jesus was born of a virgin.* Both Matthew and Luke give the background and details of the event with wonderful delicacy and with unmistakable clarity. Luke is thought to have had his story directly from Mary. Matthew may have gotten his information from Joseph. Matthew states categorically that the virgin birth was a direct fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. To the evangelical these clear statements are sufficient.

(2) *We believe in the virgin birth because the doctrine has been held in unbroken sequence in the Church* until the rise of the modern higher critical school characterized by its questioning, or denying, the supernatural and the miraculous. This divergence from the evangelical faith began in Germany during the past century and has continued down to our own day. English and American theological circles have not escaped its influence. While tradition is not infallible, nevertheless the fact that belief in the virgin birth has come to us down through the centuries, from those who lived closest to those early events, is a matter of evidence which carries great weight.

(3) *We believe in the virgin birth because it is the only logical explanation of the incarnation* — the union of deity and humanity in one person. Dr. James Orr, noted professor at the United Free College in Glasgow, once wrote: "Among those who reject the virgin birth I do not know a single one who takes, in other respects, an adequate view of the Person and work of the Saviour. It is well for us to consider the sobering fact that when one tampers with the great doctrines of Christianity, particularly those having to do with the Person and work of our Lord, one does not pull out a doctrine here and there and leave an unimpaired Christ. A careful reading of God's Word makes it abundantly clear that these great truths hang together and they also fit together perfectly."

(4) *We believe in the virgin birth because it is not one whit more remarkable than the bodily resurrection of our Lord*, the very keystone of our hope of eternity and also one of the best attested facts of history. Our faith does not stagger at the glorious truth that our Saviour died for our sins and arose for our justification. Nor should it hold back when faced with the record of

how He came into the world. If we look at the life of Christ in retrospect — His life, miracles, teachings, claims, death, resurrection and ascension, then His virgin birth fits perfectly into the picture and it is the only logical explanation of His entrance into the world. (It is of more than passing interest that those who stumble over the virgin birth often stumble over the bodily resurrection of Christ as well).

(5) *We believe in the virgin birth because the One who was born was the Creator of the world.* He then came back to redeem it for His Own. It is no idle tale that, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." We go on to learn, "All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made." In the supernatural course of events it is only logical that He should come in a supernatural manner.

(6) *We are convinced as to the fact of the virgin birth because there is no other possible explanation of the psychology involved;* the reactions of those intimately associated with the event. The internal evidences here are so overwhelming that this factor cannot be overestimated. Remember the strict Jewish law with reference to espousal: as binding as marriage itself. Remember also the Jewish law with reference to adultery, a betrothed person to be punished with death, if found guilty, for it was just as though the marriage ceremony had taken place.

What about Mary? It would have been impossible for her to hide the fact. Furthermore, she would have had to face the accusation of her own relatives and acquaintances and these would have had to be made before the religious authorities. Rather than hide her condition she went and with great joy told her cousin Elisabeth.

Furthermore, her own reaction shows the purity and innocence of her heart. She does not cringe at the announcement but does ask a searchingly pertinent question; she asks how this can be biologically possible: "Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"

Only God's Spirit could have directed the reply of the angel, a statement so absolute in its clarity and meaning that any can understand, and yet so pure in its implication that any young girl can read it without a blush: "And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that

holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Mary's reaction to this statement, which she accepted but could not fully understand was in itself a wonderful submission to something which could have become an intolerable ordeal: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy Word." And later: "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart."

But what about Joseph? Here too we see a miracle of grace in his heart. Through faith he accepted a situation which he could not apprehend. God knew the perplexing and distressing problem that he, the espoused husband of Mary, faced, and God spoke to him by a direct revelation, just as He had to Mary.

But, probably the crowning evidence is seen in Mary's behavior at the cross. Throughout the years she had carried in her heart the knowledge of His supernatural conception. Now she sees Him being nailed to the cross and her heart yearns as only a mother's can. How gladly would she have saved Him. But stop! Why is He being crucified? It is because He has claimed to be the Son of God. If He was now being crucified because He was deluded, because He was mistaken, Mary would certainly have cried out: "Wait, oh wait; He is not telling the truth, I will tell you who His father is; he is . . ." But she held her peace, because she knew of His divine origin.

(7) *We believe in the virgin birth because Christ was pre-existent with the Father*, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." In the days of His flesh He asserted that He was the Son of God, the Messiah. He accepted worship from men and He performed miracles to prove His right to be recognized as Deity. The virgin birth is but a part of His pre-existence, life, death, resurrection, ascension, present work and future coming in glory.

(8) *Finally, we believe in the virgin birth because of the awful alternative*. If He was not virgin-born, then the Bible lies, and instead of a divinely inspired revelation we have a fraud. If He was not virgin-born, then His mother was a promiscuous and dishonest woman and He was an illegitimate son. If He was not virgin-born, then He Himself was deluded and the entire structure of His Person and Work is undermined and we become of all men most miserable.

In stating our faith in the virgin birth of our Lord we accept it as a part of His supernatural Self — a part in the history of the One who said: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

Dr. L. Nelson Bell

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D. WHAT CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARS SAY

(Statements regarding the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ)

The Virgin Birth: Does it Make any Difference?

The affirmation that Jesus Christ is truly a Divine Person — the Son of God made flesh — is the expression of the central point of Christianity. This belief that Jesus is the Son of God and that He became flesh through being born of a Virgin and being conceived by the Holy Ghost practically determines a person's views on everything else in Christianity. Therefore the Virgin Birth does make a difference.

How *much* difference it makes can be understood when we ask: What would it mean if Christ were not "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary"? It would mean that there was no divine incarnation and no God-man. This in turn would mean that the world has no Redeemer. If He, the Christ, were not the Redeemer, then the world has never had a Redeemer and thus we are yet wandering in spiritual darkness with no solution to the problems of sin, of salvation and with absolutely no real hope for our future eternal destiny. It would mean that Christ would have been conceived by natural generation, which in turn would mean that He was born of a mother stained with the sin of unchastity (for Joseph protested he was not that father); that He was a sinful being like other human beings, and hence could not have redeemed even Himself, to say nothing of redeeming the world.

In other words, if Christ were not Virgin Born as the Bible claims, then the whole foundation and fabric of Christianity as set forth in the Holy Bible is completely overthrown.

C. V. Hunter

The Virgin Birth — a Proven Fact

One of the means by which contemporary thinkers have sought to evade the literalness of the Virgin Birth of our Lord

is that expressed by the words, "The Virgin Birth of Christ belongs to the poetry of the Christian faith." The implication here is, of course, that the writers (i.e., Matthew and Luke) had no thought of expressing serious fact in their birth-narratives, but rather, that they were trying to put into words some fanciful "transcendent" attitudes toward Jesus of Nazareth. By this view, the narratives are to be taken "seriously but not literally." The serious literature upon the doctrine, by such scholars as James Orr and J. Gresham Machen, has had for its major thrust the examination of the birth-narratives. It has been precisely this which has been the strength of these investigations: that the narratives of *Matthew 1* and *Luke 1* and 2 are hard-hitting narratives, of a piece with the larger documents of which they are a part, and written with a straight-forward seriousness. If ever prose were prose, it is here! And serious scholars, including some at least in the liberal-modernist tradition, have acknowledged that these men have proved their case. Such scholars may reject the factuality of the Virgin Birth — some continue to do so. But they are too honest intellectually to try to evaporate the narratives into the thin air of poetic fancy. The two great Evangelist-witnesses have given serious accounts; and he who declines to accept them must do so upon other grounds than that they express poetic fancy or primitive credulity.

Harold B. Kuhn

The Virgin Birth

There is only one real problem regarding the Virgin Birth of Christ. That is the problem of supernaturalism. Let us grant that the Greek word *parthenos* is in some instances used of a woman who is not physically a virgin, as an unabridged Greek lexicon will reveal. It is nevertheless true that the regular meaning of this Greek word is "virgin." It is also perfectly clear that the only New Testament accounts of the conception of Jesus (*Matthew 1:18-25*, *Luke 1:26-56*) are intended to relate unequivocally that Jesus was conceived without a human father: (1) "After Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before the marriage had been consummated . . ." (*Matthew 1:18*); (2) " . . . a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph . . . and the virgin's name was Mary" (*Luke 1:26-27*); (3) "'How can this be, since I do not know a man?'" (*Luke 1:34*); (4) " . . . 'nothing shall be impossible with God'" (*Luke 1:37*); (5) the

quotation from the Greek text of Isaiah 7:14, "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son" (Matthew 1:23); and (6) ". . . and he did not know her until she had given birth to a son" (Matthew 1:25).

Then why the difficulty with these passages? It is simply that human beings are not born without a human father. There are only two alternatives: either the story is not the objective truth, or the birth of Jesus is a miracle in the forthright supernatural sense of the word. In our sophisticated culture supernaturalism has largely been thrown out along with superstition. Where this is done, only the first alternative remains, and the "virgin birth" must either be explained as a "natural" event or else rejected completely.

Yet supernaturalism is at the very heart of Christianity, and the evidence for a supernaturalism in the New Testament which is intelligent, moral, and beneficent is so clear that it can be rejected only on an *a priori* ground which refuses to accept reasonable evidence.

The issue, then, is not one of text or words. It is a theological issue. If no miracle can take place within our world of time and space, then there could have been no virgin birth, no resurrection, no other objective miracle, and our "faith is vain" and "we are of all people the most to be pitied" (I Corinthians 15:17, 19). If, on the other hand, actual supernatural events are possible in our world, through the intervention of the God of the supernatural, then miracle may be accepted where the evidence is sufficient; and the linguistic data for the miracle of the virgin birth of Jesus are fully adequate.

J. Harold Greenlee

*Christ's Deity and Virgin Birth —
An Inescapable Relationship*

The upper levels of a being's potential are unchangably established at conception. While modifying influences operate on an organism throughout its life, no combination of environmental circumstances can, for example, transform a congenital idiot into a genius. Man cannot become God any more than a tadpole can become an elephant by controlling its associations, diet and surroundings. A tadpole can become one thing only, a frog.

If one holds to the uniformity of the law, confirmed by geneticists, that each species perpetuates only its own kind, Christ must have been born God, for He never could have become God. No man who has ever lived has surmounted his generic limitations. Realized them fully? Possibly. Surpassed them? Never! To believe that this occurred in Christ requires an act of faith so far beyond the reach of informed man that it is infinitely less complicated to believe that He was, as the Bible simply but confidently asserts, conceived by the Holy Ghost.

Those repudiating the Biblical claim attempt to explain Christ's nature as (1) becoming God or (2) sharing a common divinity with all men. The latter, a popular position, leads inevitably to the conclusion that one who is only quantitatively divine is not truly God. I choose to believe that Christ is God because he was conceived by God and born of the virgin, Mary.

Paul H. Wood

Incarnation Presupposes Virgin Birth

Salvation rests entirely upon the Person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. This fact, in turn, rests upon the validity of the virgin birth. It is the only explanation which the Bible gives of the incarnation.

We must be clear at this point. Jesus did not start out to save the world as a man, and by virtue of His godly life become the Son of God (the old adoptionist view now revitalized in neo-liberalism). But Jesus came to the earth as God, and through the miraculous conception effected by the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary, He became the incarnate God-man. In other words, He did not become the Redeemer in order to be the Son of God, but He came as the Son of God in order to be the Redeemer.

This is the conviction of every minister who has been, and is now, mightily used of God in winning men to Christ.

Delbert R. Rose

"Jesus' Sinlessness Demands a Virgin Birth"

The pre-existence of the Lord Jesus Christ who is co-eternal with the Father is a necessary presupposition in any discussion of His Deity as related to the Virgin Birth. The Deity of Jesus

Christ has its true basis in the fact that He is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for the Trinity is an eternal order of being.

The question still remains, however, concerning the "how" or manner in which this Pre-existent One became incarnate. It is affirmed in the Holy Scriptures that it was by means of the Virgin Birth. The sublime truth that Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary reveals God's initiative and the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, as stated in Luke 1:35 ("And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God" A.S.V.). This Divine activity was necessitated, at least partially, by the fact that Mary herself was not free from original sin. For this reason it is conceivable that the Virgin Birth of itself would not have secured the sinlessness of Christ; yet, at the same time, it must be admitted that any man, Jesus Christ included, who is born in the normal way would have been one with sinners. The absence of the male in the conception of Jesus Christ is testimony to the fact that God Himself has taken the initiative in the Incarnation and in the coming of the sinless sin-bearer. Both the Virgin Birth of our Lord and His sinlessness are due primarily to the supernatural power of God.

Perhaps we can allow with Augustine that there might possibly have been some other way for the coming of Christ into the human family, but that the Virgin Birth must have been the best method, for it was the manner chosen by God. Since I firmly believe that the Holy Spirit is the primary author of Scripture through human instrumentality in full range of active human powers, I have no hesitation in believing that Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary. Both Christology and Soteriology are involved, and in the coming of Jesus Christ the Eternal One into our human family we have a sacrifice for man's redemption that reaches to the very nature and being of God Himself.

William M. Arnett

The Virgin Birth of Christ

The miracle of the Incarnation of God was accomplished by a conception wrought by the Holy Spirit and a birth of the Virgin Mary. This is the testimony of the first and third gospels, of Ignatius and the Apostles' Creed. There is no reason to assume that this was not the faith of all of the New Testament writers.

John 1:13 (cf. 3:3-8) seems to be built upon the analogy of the Virgin Birth and there was a second century text, used by Irenaeus and Tertullian, in which this verse occurs in the singular, that is, "In the name of Him who was born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man — but of God."

When Paul did go to Jerusalem on his visit of inquiry into the things of Jesus Christ, he conferred for fifteen days with Peter and James the brother of the Lord (Galatians 1:18-19). Thereafter on Paul's authority Luke, like a "legal expert," drew up the "authentic knowledge" of the Christian beginnings as Paul's defence before his Excellency, Judge Theophilus.* Thus the Apostle Paul would have known of the miracles of the Incarnation and his epistolary references to the birth of Jesus are best understood as being written on the basis of his acceptance of an account given by James and later recorded at Paul's direction by Luke.

Galatians 4:4f speaks only of a Divine Father and only of a human mother. The phrase, "the Spirit of His Son," implies that the Spirit's most eminent action occurred in God's sending forth His Son born of a woman. Likewise Romans 1:3-4 distinguishes our Lord's Person as of the seed of David according to the flesh, but as designated the Son of God in a powerful way according to the Spirit of holiness. Ignatius understands the last phrase in this contrast as carrying with it "born of the Virgin Mary" as it does in Matthew, Luke and the Creed. Philippians 2:5-11 is a very old hymn or creed which presents the Pre-existent Christ and accordingly implies that such a Divine Person would not enter human life as do those who are merely temporal, human persons.

**Fragment of Muratori* cited J. Stevenson, *A New Eusebius*, pp. 144-145; Lk. I, 1-4; Act. I-1; J. Knox, *The New Testament*, 1963, p. 19.

In my opinion, the earliest form of the *kerygma* and the primitive narrative as set forth in Mark did not publicly proclaim the Virgin Birth in order not to endanger the life of Mary. Yet the primitive community always held this truth in its heart and did publish it after the death of Mary in the first and third gospels and the Church has reaffirmed it ever since in the Creed.

William C. Robinson

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